THE SEX-GORE NETHERWORLD
OF FILMMAKER ANDY MILLIGAN

the Ghastly One

JIMMY MCDONOUGH

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THE HEIRESS, 1949. *Montgomery Clift proposes to Olivia De Havilland; they are to run away together later that night. But De Havilland - who was jilted by him years before - has no intention of going and is about to send him away forever.*

Her aunt says, "Can you be so cruel?"

She says, "Yes, I can be very cruel. I have been taught by masters."

Oh, God. That is the most beautiful line ever heard on the screen.

- ANDY MILLIGAN

MONSTROSITY

Never tell people the truth about themselves.

- PROFESSOR SELINSKI IN MILLIGAN'S *SANDRA H*

FIRST, BABE, A CONFESSION: I should've killed Andy. A strange statement for a biographer to make about his subject. Why? Let's get to that when night falls.

Andy Milligan knew darkness well. He was one of those creatures who rode the midnight train, came from the land of screaming skulls. Milligan was also one of the purest artists I've ever known. Most likely you've never even heard his name.

***

Cut to Los Angeles, November 1987. Andy's rampaging around the shabby, jerry-built set, securing his battered Arriflex camera while adjusting the clip-on lights, careful to dance around the tangle of old, chewed-up extension cords that are powering the shoot from the outlets of an oblivious bodega owner down the street. With his white dishevelled hair, walrus mustache, and pouchy cheeks, Milligan resembles a demonic otter.

It's the wee hours, and I'm manning the slate for Milligan. He's only shouted at me seventeen times for not getting my ass out of frame fast enough once I've yelled the scene / take number and clacked the wood. Nobody's fast enough for Andy. We have commandeered a dilapidated car wash in the Silver Lake district of Los Angeles. Concrete and colorless, it is one of the ugliest locations I have ever seen in my life. Andy loves the place. For a second Milligan surveys the odd tableau before him, a string of misfits - each stranger than the last - posing as some sort of punk rock gang. A balding long-haired musician, a miniature Pollyanna, a harsh butch number alleged to be female, and a pudgy Paul Lynde lookalike in a ripped pink T-shirt creep along the dirty street. They're all decked out in bracelets, multicolored ribbons, and scarves. One sports a huge nylon butterfly tiara, another a forehead tattoo that reads "Mom." This is Andy's idea of punk.

In an attempt to appear menacing, the sad sacks dance around their victim with choreography that is somewhat less than *West Side Story* calibre. "Gonna Goetz ya ... gonna *Goetz* ya!" clucks the ersatz Lynde. "Bernie Goetz - get it?!?" This topical reference to an all-but-forgotten subway vigilante was requested by producer Lew Mishkin to make the film as current as yesteryear's headlines. "More 'New York Black,'" pleads Andy, his only direction to the actors.

An LAPD squad car appears. Milligan, in his best ass-kissing humility, tells the officer this is his film class. "I'll let you off the hook - this time," says the cop, pulling away slowly. Andy turns around to inspect his time worn crew, a sly grin crossing his Cheshire cat face. "Oldest film class in the world! *Hee hee*."

A second later Andy is tearing into some poor schmuck who's asked for his "motivation" for the scene. "Motivation!?! Motivation!!" barks Milligan. "You're pullin' an Adler, babe, pulling a Stella Adler - all she does is bang the furniture!" Andy then goes on to badmouth Uta Hagen, Herbert Bergdorf, and any other acting teacher whose name happens to flit through his head.

Somehow we stumble through a take before a frantic look crosses Andy's craggy face. "Check the gate! *Why didn't somebody tell me to check the gate?!*" Andy shoots all his films on short ends - the garbage film left over from normal shoots - and occasionally Milligan's camera has been known to run without any.

The gate is, of course, empty. Andy plops himself down in a huff to load magazines, his hands moving back and forth inside a black lightproof film changing sack in his lap that he has dubbed the "masturbation bag." Tottering nearby is Milligan's bony, long-suffering Louisiana hustler boyfriend, Wayne Keeton, who - much to Andy's annoyance - has been telling cast and crew all about the murder at the car wash a few days before. "Kin I have a cheeseburger, An'y?" "*No!*" screams Milligan. Keeton slinks away, mumbling to himself. Just another night in Andyland.

***

The movie is *Monstrosity*, the tale of a Frankenstein with a heart of gold, which has reunited Milligan with his adversarial producer Lew Mishkin and longtime star Hal Borske, all working together for the first time in decades. It is an understandably surreal affair.

Hal sums up the atmosphere a few nights later when, taking a smoke break from his role as lead monstrosity, he casually sits offscreen in his absurd Flintstone vest, ski boots, and red fright wig, watching Andy frantically prepare for the murder of pinch-hitting script supervisor Frank Echols. Echols, a tall, silver-haired Southern dandy, puffs on his own cig as he putters about, oblivious to the bloody axe sticking out of his head.

"It all just looks so fucking fake," Hal mutters, a look on his face that is equal parts amazement, revulsion, and affection.

***

People gawk at car accidents, read lurid detective magazines, sneak around state fair curtains to eyeball the dead two-headed baby in a jar. It's human nature: you want to see what you're not supposed to. This is the sick impulse that exploitation films cater to - and rarely satisfy.

Since the dawn of the motion picture business, the lure of the forbidden has fleeced many a sucker. Motion picture censorship has existed on a state and municipal level since 1907, and Hollywood has long policed its own morality with powerful regulatory organizations such as the Hays Office, inaugurated in 1922 and becoming omnipotent with the creation of the 1934 Production Code (itself a response to racier pictures designed to get patrons into theaters suffering from the Depression). Major studios had to kowtow to these self-created restrictions, leaving a large black hole for independent producers willing to risk public condemnation, censorship problems, and legal hassles in order to make some loot.

From the teens through the fifties came "exposes" on such subjects as white slavery, drug addiction, venereal disease, sex education, birth control, abortion, even tribal customs alleged and real. The exploitation biz was close to carny hucksterism, particularly in its early decades: not only was the movie a piece of shit, but during intermission lecturers purporting to

"educate" would work the crowd up with some spiel, hawking cheap booklets featuring badly drawn pictures of reproductive organs.

These were crass pictures that fed on people's ignorance, fears, and hatred: movies that, as Kenneth Turan and Stephen Zito wrote in *Sinema*, were "sold on the sensational aspect of the subject matter rather than the star power or artistic excellence." And yet for all their joy-buzzer shock appeal, "exploitation films were basically didactic and Victorian in outlook, upholding the virtues of cleanliness, chastity, marriage, and family life." This was a central paradox to the grindhouse world: *talk dirty to me; I'll see you in church.*

The fifties brought a surge in burlesque and nudist pictures, the sixties sexploitation and gore, the seventies biker epics and blaxploitation. The term *exploitation film* has become a very big sideshow tent encompassing all sorts of genres and subgenres, but basically it refers to low-budget pictures with subject matter too shocking for the major studios, made by independent producers for exhibition in mostly marginal theaters - drive-ins, grind houses, adult theaters, etc.

These venues have almost completely disappeared, as has the product. But the legacy of the exploitation film lingers on. Its tentacles extend into everything, from movies like *American Beauty* and *Hannibal* to tabloid television to radio shock jocks like Howard Stern. With progress like this, you might ask what good was it all? I'd agree with you. But for some reason Andy Milligan still matters to me.

***

From 1965 to 1988 Andy Milligan churned out twenty-nine movies, countless plays, even a TV sitcom. Although he started out in the rarefied avant garde atmosphere of Greenwich Village theater, he made a name for himself in the gutter: New York City's 42nd Street. The Deuce was a long city block in the heart of Times Square full of garish theaters catering to a predominantly male crowd on the prowl for thrills that seemed to grow more depraved with each new triple bill. Lurid posters and banners sucked you into dark slime pits you half-expected to be violated in.

Andy's movies are plain nasty: *Torture Dungeon, Bloodthirsty Butchers, Gutter Trash, Fleshpot on 42nd Street, The Ghastly Ones*. "Sown in incest! Harvested in hate!" screams the campaign for *Seeds*. But Andy's movies deliver a different kind of jolt from what the tawdry, colorful one-sheets promise. Milligan's no-budget films are a world unto themselves, possessing a grim, grimy reality not unlike a novel by Hubert Selby, Jr., or Louis-Ferdinand Celine. A sadist, street person, and misogynist, Andy made films of the heart in a milieu where the only art was that of the con.

Casting ancient character actresses, nonacting antique dealers, and whatever piece of rough trade Andy had slept with the night before, Milligan made sexploitation pictures, gore shockers, even preposterous medieval and Civil War costume "epics." Working out of New York City, London, Hollywood, *and* Staten Island, Andy thrived on laughable budgets - many hovering in the $10,000-$20,000 range - and utilized ragtag equipment silent filmmakers would have rejected. Andy Milligan literally did everything in his movies except star in them. Against all odds he persevered, churning out plays and movies with the frenzy of a maniac.

Milligan is an anomaly. He began making movies in the thick of the experimental film scene of the sixties, alongside Andy Warhol, Kenneth Anger, and Jack Smith. His movies reveal this in their emphasis on the moment, the guerrilla camera technique and indifference to fancy editing, not to mention their "underground" subject matter.

Yet for all their outrageousness, Milligan's films often harken back to ground-out Hollywood potboilers of the thirties and forties (what Andy called "Depression pictures") and the wages-of-sin-is-death exploitation morality plays of the same period. In terms of aesthetic, technique, and temperament, Andy Milligan and Rainer Werner Fassbinder are eerily similar. While far more sophisticated, movies like *The Stationmaster's Wife* or *Martha* don't seem all that far from *Seeds*, and entire sections of *Berlin Alexanderplatz* feel as if Milligan could have been lurking behind the camera. "People talk and talk without ever getting close to one another," Christian Braad Thomsen wrote of one particularly pungent Fassbinder creation. It's a description that fits any Andy picture.

Despite the frenzy of activity around him, Milligan was a lonesome figure. Reviled by horror fans, laughed at by the industry, he was considered a joke, beyond bad. "If you're an Andy Milligan fan," sniffed one haughty critic, "there's no hope for you."

In recent years there has been a sort of nostalgia applied to exploitation films. Dewy-eyed acolytes devoted to so-called "bad" films have somewhat robbed them of their forbidden appeal, relegating them to the same quaint collectible pile as obscure rockabilly records and wacky fifties lamps. The apotheosis of this impulse is perhaps Tim Burton's 1994 hit homage *Ed Wood* (itself a sweetly naive but toned-down Hollywood treatment of a much bleaker work, Rudolph Grey's biography *Nightmare of Ecstasy*).

But unlike Ed Wood, Jr., and such other exploitation "icons" as Russ Meyer or Herschell Gordon Lewis, Andy Milligan has virtually no following, barely even a cult. And after putting the magnifying glass to Andy's tortured films and life, I doubt that casting will begin for the TV miniseries. Milligan still disturbs.

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The opening of *Torture Dungeon* unfolds like a puppet show in hell. A grim funeral procession, ostensibly set in the Middle Ages. A morose gaggle of odd-looking misfits tromp across beercan-strewn sand in Andy's colorful, bizarre costumes, some on horseback, others carrying the coffin. Tawdry medieval grandeur on a scabby Staten Island beach. There is a short service for the departed. Lady Jane, sister of the deceased, hurls herself on the grave, sobbing.

Her surviving brother, the evil Duke of Norwich, rushes to comfort her. She runs off. The Duke - secret killer of the sibling - again feigns concern. "What a pity," he sneers, daubing his forehead with a garish hanky. "In the bloom of his manhood, like the roses he so dearly loved. Cut down before his time. Oh, well - c'est la vie."

"You hated him!" shrieks Lady Jane, wearing a tall, conical hat sporting a plumed veil as tall as she.

"Hate is a strong word, my dear sister," hisses the Duke.

She spits in his face. Moments later she blandly confides to her sister that she's pregnant - with her departed brother's baby.

One hysterical scene, absurd and over the top, featuring a ragtag bunch of thespians and pseudothespians playacting medieval times on a Tottenville beach. Yet there is a passion, an intensity that Andy brings to it that is utterly real. This is what makes Milligan different from the rest of the schlockmeisters churning out kitsch as they smirked behind the camera - and what makes him so interesting. Exploitation was no joke to Andy.

***

Now, Dear Reader, I am not about to convince you that Andy Milligan is an undiscovered Orson Welles, a forgotten von Stroheim. Go rent one of his movies I dare you. His murky little melodramas can be entirely off-putting and sometimes downright impossible to watch. Andy slapped his movies together with nary a thought for pacing, with dialogue that sounds like it was recorded via tin can, and stories that often suffer from holes you can drive a truck through. If a film's climactic denouement was too costly to shoot, Milligan merely alluded to it, or worse, used a poorly shot take where you can't see what happens anyway. When Andy's movies are bad, there's nothing – *nothing* - worse. If one looks at them with expectations of a "real" movie - or the kind of velvet painting-bad thrills associated with many exploitation movies - one will be frustrated.

But scratch the dirty surface of Milligan's pictures and a very personal kind of poison seeps out of every frame. I have been watching Andy's films for decades now and find them more fascinating than ever. The title credit "Written, Photographed and Directed, by Andy Milligan" invariably promises a disturbed, deeply personal nightmare not to be seen anywhere else.

Milligan's universe is a bleak one. Women are conniving, narcissistic creatures; men are either pathetically weak or sociopathic monsters. Crooked doctors, molesting priests, lying lovers, oppressive mothers, damaged offspring ... nobody gets along in Andy movies; everybody's on

the make. Love is just another hustle, a way to oppress and control. Virtually everybody lies, cheats, and steals. Empathy is reserved for society's freaks hunchbacks, cripples, and other disadvantaged souls portrayed as innocents who've been fatally damaged by the world. But the often violent nature of these outcasts usually does them in as well.

Milligan reserves his greatest contempt for organized religion and family - structures that exist only to manipulate, brainwash, and crush the individual. Whenever families gather, destruction ensues, and mother is the root of all evil. Andy's Mommy-hatred is all-consuming - hell, even *invigorating*. There are few happy endings in Andy's films, and frequently everyone is dead by the final frame.

There is a giddy, even heartfelt insanity to his penny-ante pictures. Part of it is Milligan's eye: his cockeyed compositions recall Lisette Model's earthy, depraved photographs of a forties New York City Bowery bar called Sammy's. Life just seems to burst from the frame in all its lusty, chaotic, uncontrollable power.

The point of view Milligan puts across is brutal, especially for his times. His movies spew forth vitriolic rants that can stop the viewer dead - had they been in a big-budget mainstream movie, he would have been run out of town on a rail. Only in the netherworld of 42nd Street could Andy have gotten away with it all.

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> *Here was a theatre that was predicated on the stimulation of the rawest and most adolescent of human interactions and desires: incest and patricide; blood lust; sexual anxiety and conflict; morbid fascination with bodily mutilation and death; loathing of authority; fear of insanity; an overall disgust for the human condition and its imperfect institution.*

Mel Gordon is writing about The Grand Guignol, the shocking theater that flourished in France from the turn of the century until the early nineteen-sixties, but he might as well be describing Milligan's oeuvre.

In a lot of sex and horror exploitation (most Herschell Gordon Lewis pictures or such unsavory fifties wonders as *The Hypnotic Eye* or *Horrors of the Black Museum*) the cardboard plots exist only as filler amid set pieces of shock or sadism. Not so with Milligan. Cut out the sex and gore and his films lose none of their attack. Violence is utilized as an exclamation point that merely underscores Andy's message - rant, rant, rant, *chop!* Rant, rant, rant, *slice!* - and it's a message far more unsettling than some ketchup-covered pile of rubber intestines being wiggled at the camera. The real horror in Milligan's universe is humanity.

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Once the sin center of the universe, Andy Milligan's Times Square is just a memory now. The hellhole theaters and flesh dens of 42nd Street have been replaced by a blander, Disney-run evil of theme stores, food courts, and zillionplex theaters showing assembly-line Hollywood product. The forbidden subjects of yesterday's exploitation shockers are now everyday fodder. Andy was the last vestige of a world that no longer exists.

By the time I caught up with Milligan in the mid-eighties, most of his exploitation-biz peers were retired museum pieces. Andy was still doing it, still churning it out for $1.98. This fascinated me, and I became part of his crew in the late eighties.

Little did I know that Andy's world would completely overtake my own. Before the adventure ended I was standing in the boots of his dead hustler boyfriend - and, dressed up as a dimestore Frankenstein, vulnerable before the eye of his ancient camera. By the end of it all I'd also watch Milligan die, inch by miserable inch.

Andy was a million contradictions. He was tormented by the past while claiming to have forgotten it all. "I just 'magic slate,' babe. Every day's a blank canvas." A cantankerous, violent personality, nothing made Andy happier than red roses in bloom. He despised women, yet married one of his leading ladies. A sadist, he'd cry watching Cathy Rigby during performance 12,347 of *Peter Pan*. He dodged questions, even outright lied to me, yet I would not hesitate to call him completely honest. He was a puritan, yet sex

had been a grand obsession of his films and life. And it was sex that destroyed him in the end.

It would be easy to poke fun at Andy, minimize him as some wacky, marginal camp artifact, reduce his story to blurbs on an exploitation poster: "*See* a maniac making movies on a budget of nothing! *Watch* a hustler who can't act stumble through his lines! *Gasp* as Milligan tortures another actress!" Andy wasn't the easiest person to like or defend. He looked like a Bowery bum, often treated people badly, and generally acted like a psychopath. But somehow he got to you.

Many evenings, after *Monstrosity* shooting wrapped for the day, I'd retire to Milligan's Hollywood home and - after we sat on the couch watching his beloved *Golden Girls* sitcom or sharing some ice cream with Wayne, who provided the occasional nonsensical sequitur as he jibber-jabbered to the bird and cat - the interviews for this book took place, sometimes running deep into the night. "Well, me darlin' ... " Andy would begin, then launch into some unbelievable rant that I would find entirely captivating no matter how vile the content.

The relationship of biographer and subject can be a very sadomasochistic affair, as Andy was well aware. The biographer wants questions answered and the subject, flattered by the attention, yields. The subject can also torture the biographer by dangling information he'll reveal at a later date or maybe not at all. Milligan would start down some very promising path, then stop suddenly, saying, "I'll tell you on my deathbed." My frustrations only seemed to thrill him.

"You just know my professional life," he taunted. "You've got enough Jekyll and Hyde stuff, you don't need any other. For you it's an income - the ugly, insane. For other people it's painful."

Andy was ambivalent about his biography. "You can't get back at the writer once it's in writing. They have their ivory tower and they can't be touched," Andy hissed on the phone late one night. "Perfect example is the critic in *All About Eve*, the George Sanders role - he makes and breaks lives. Biographers really are on hallowed ground when they write about other

people. And they can inflict whatever they want on anybody - it's a power." Milligan gleefully encouraged me to come clean in print. "This is what they'll remember about Jimmy McDonough - the fact that he can look in the mirror and recognize what business he's in - peddling flesh."

"Andy! C'mon!" I sputtered.

"You *are!* Babe, what is a reporter but a flesh peddler? We're in an age of honesty now, darlin', so admit it. 'I'm a flesh peddler for money, I'm a whore.' *Everybody's* a whore. We have to be. Say it at the end of the book, be honest. 'I've come to one conclusion - *I'm a Flesh Peddling Whore.' Aha hahahahaha!*"

Having demolished me for the evening, he politely reminded me I was running up my long-distance bill, then hung up.

It never failed - Andy got under your skin. I wanted to find out exactly what had gotten under his to create such a bile-filled vision. This is a tale of violence: mental, physical, sexual, and even biographical.

Andy Milligan's malevolent spirit burned brighter than any fire. May his flame scorch you in the pages that follow.

READER, TAKE NOTE: *The Ghastly One* delves deeply into the story of the Caffe Cino, and, to a lesser extent, the 42nd Street sexploitation business. Milligan was a shadowy figure at best, and at times he all but vanishes from the narrative. But to understand what made Andy tick, one must comprehend the pair of very strange worlds that accepted him - however begrudgingly.

PART I

THE CAFFE CINO

1957-1968

1

SEEDS

You know, if the father in America was a little stronger about what went on in the fucking family, the relationships would be a hell of a whole lot better.

But he just sits there ... letting her fuck everything up.

- CAROLYN, IN MILLIGAN'S *THE BITCH*

YOU COME FROM A VERY HAPPY FAMILY, DO YOU? I don't. I really didn't have a pleasant childhood ... but you don't turn into an artist if you have a happy home life. I only write about what I know. I just remember the ugly things.

I was born Andrew Jackson Milligan, Jr., in St. Paul, Minnesota. February 12, 1929. Lincoln's birthday. I'm an army brat. Moved all the time. Dad was retired as a captain. He worked his ass off, day and night. A shy man. He'd walk into a room, somebody would say something, and his eyes would go to the ground right away. He had three favorite pieces of music - "Laredo," "Brahms's Lullaby," "Danny Boy." Gentle person. Dad and I look very much alike. I never really got to know him. None of the family did.

Self-taught. Only an eighth-grade education. Very well-read man. A wealth of knowledge. He's the one who turned me on to *Wolfville Days* and *Wolfville Nights* by Alfred Henry Lewis. Actual tales of the old 1860s West. The real West. No married life, just whores. Their buddies and their horses were most important.

This woman my father married - Marie Gladys - was a real sick individual. She was the one who ruined the family. Very neurotic. And my father never said anything. He was weak. It was the usual: strong woman, weak male. He never laughed until after she died.

Dad and Mom met on a bus. He was a soldier and she passed him a note. She called him on the base and they got together. She was a

monster. Very fat, ate continually. Three hundred and some pounds. She was so fat I had to clean her toes out ... her feet were always dirty. I don't like fat women. I've never had a fat person yet who didn't open my refrigerator or walk into my kitchen.

The world revolved around Marie Gladys. Everything she said was gospel. The stories she used to tell about Dad - that he was a womanizer. Real possessive, jealous woman. She'd be jealous of the newspaper he'd read. The book he'd read. She'd be jealous of anything I would do, Louise would do. She spread poison - like American women do - through Louise, Harley, and myself.

Oh, she was sick, sick. When I was twelve years old we were stationed in Trinidad, Colorado - my dad was a sergeant at that time - and I'd gone to see him before my sister and mother joined us. We went into this restaurant and this waitress - Irene was her name - she'd sewn my initials on a robe that my father had bought me for my birthday. And my mother had arrived that night and the waitress came over and said, "How did Junior" - I was called Junior - "like his robe?" My father started turning a little white and my mother threw the table over, furious, walked out. And she said, "Who's this whore you're with?" She took me in the car that night to go kill this woman. That's how mad my mother was. Crazy woman.

One Christmas, Dad locked himself down in the fruit cellar where we kept the preserves. He was gonna blow his brains out. Because he was so miserable with her.

We were never very happy at Christmas time. We'd all have to pretend to be. I'd lock myself in my room or just disappear, because it was hypocrisy. The home life was a sham. A sham. It tried to be a normal household and there was nothing normal about it. I didn't even find out about Harley until I was twenty. My mother had been married before. She never told me. I never knew he was a stepbrother.

She was an awful mother. Louise and I played with matches, set the back porch on fire. And I got the blame for it. My mother burned my

hand with an electric stove. To teach me a lesson. I had scars on my hands for years. Oh, she was sick.

I started out like most kids, building little stages out of cardboard in the basement at nine or ten. Once you get greasepaint in your blood you're poisoned for life. But my mother was very much against show business. She'd say that was sissy shit. So I always used to hide anything like that. I had a huge scar where I cut myself using a Boy Scout knife. From cutting cardboard. It was so deep, it didn't even bleed, hee hee. Cut to the bone. I wouldn't show it at dinner. I kept hiding it under the table to keep her from raising hell. I couldn't tell her I was making a puppet stage.

I went to German Lutheran school. I was forced to believe. The first class was religion. We had a nasty old German guy with gout, big red nose, must've drank. Used to hit your knuckles with a ruler. He'd go on about Adam and Eve and they had two sons and I'd raise my hand and say, "If they had two sons, well, who did they marry and have kids by?" *Whack!* I'd always ask about the holes in the Bible. "If the ark was only a hundred-something long and they had all the animals in the world, how could they all get on the ark?" *Whack!* Hee hee. I was always in the corner. Always asking questions.

My father was in the Army, Harley was in the Army. I decided I'd be the black sheep, pick the Navy. The service was like an escape hatch from the loony bin.

I loved the Navy. Had a very good time. Met Jack Larson - Jimmy Olsen on the *Superman* TV show - and Tab Hunter. Tab's real name's Art Gelien - he was only about seventeen. A seaman. From an orphanage background. He used to throw parties for Navy personnel at the San Diego Ballroom.

It was wild in California at that time, around '48,sort of swinging. San Diego Hotel, the wildest party. I've never seen anything like that in my life. There were nude bronzed musclemen with eighteen ribbons tied to

them that went to all the tables. Eighteen sailors got lucky that night, tee hee.

I'd go down to Tijuana on the weekends. Watch Bobby and Joyce, a dance act. He played the sailor, she played the prostitute. They'd do "The House of Blue Lights." Two shows a night. He was five-four, she was five-one. Just adorable. Tijuana, a dirty roads town.

After I got out of the Navy, I grew. Until then I was never my own person. I thought the sun rose and set on my mother. I was tied to her apron strings, her slave - until I discovered what a sickie she was.

Ran off to Frisco with this guy. I had saved up money to go to theater school. We lived above Grace's Grotto and stole Hostess cupcakes. Very rough time.

That was about the time my mother pulled this thing about being sick to get me home. She had a breakdown at about forty-six. They had to commit her, she was going so crazy. During menopause. I spent all this money I saved, and when I got home she was sittin' in the kitchen eatin' cookies. She wasn't sick. My whole acting school down the drain. We had a terrible scene - she started crying and carrying on. And I remember in the middle of all the crying I was tearing up some penny postcards, and she just stopped - "Oh, don't do that! I can use those."

I told her I'd never see her again. She said, "Oh, you'll come crawling back." I said, "I won't see you again until the day you die." And I didn't.

At the funeral this stupid pastor - we never went to church - was talking about how great she was and I stood up and said, "She was a *bitch!*" Everybody looked. And my father slugged me one, hee hee. I guess he really did love her.

After the funeral my brother's going through the belongings, taking all the linens he wants. We'd just buried her. He's a terrible man. I remember years later I had a rough time, I asked him to loan me a

hundred dollars. He said, "What collateral do you have?" I hate my sister and brother. Terrible.

The last time I went back, my sister Louise and I had a slugfest. See, after my mother died, my father remarried. I have a Japanese stepmother and half-sister - Taka and Kyoko - very sweet, both of them. I got along beautifully with my stepmother and sister, but Louise was trying to take the house away from them through my father. I called her a cunt. And her husband came in and cracked one of my ribs. I never went back after that.

I took off for New York. Hitchhiked. Slept in Central Park a couple of nights. Picked up a newspaper and saw "Usher wanted, Anco Theater." The Anco was the worst theater on 42nd Street. A pigsty, fleabitten. Bad sound, bad screen, bad everything. I worked there for five days and got, like, thirteen dollars salary. It was the dregs.

Second day I was there, I was reading *Showbiz* and it said "Puppeteers wanted, *Aladdin and His Magic Lamp*, ten weeks in Texas." I had never puppeteered professionally in my life. Five days later I was doing *Aladdin* for a ten-week tour of the South, then we did an eight-week tour of *Pinocchio*. I made a living off that for years. Toured all over the country. You got a couple hundred a week, which was big bread at that time. Lived in cheap hotels.

These two crazy lesbians who ran the company would scream at each other, scream at the puppeteers. It was very unpleasant. They had this big fat lesbian friend of theirs that used to sleep on the floor of the apartment - she was the one who created the sets. She was three hundred pounds, had this rabbit that used to chew on her hair. I always thought she was bald. It was wild.

Three of us in the tour, that's it. We had a truck, played all the roles. It was fun - it was live, you really learned how to wing it. Took us an hour and forty-five minutes to set up the stage, forty-five minutes to tear down. This stupid lesbian would book us five hundred miles apart and you'd have to make it in two hours. We were always half an hour late,

the puppet strings were always tangled ... I remember painting a lot of the Pinocchio puppets and sets because they were so bad. I was ashamed.

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Have I ever been in love? How many times? That's none of your business. On my deathbed I'll tell you everything. Yes, maybe we can arrange that. Do an interview going out.

George Nelle I lived with for three and a half years. Very nice person. Puppeteer. That was the first love. Very, very intense relationship. He was thirty, thirty-one. I was twenty-two.

George and I were part of a group of maybe ten puppeteers who worked all across America. We were the only ones who would go out on a plank, twelve feet up. We always worked because of that. No guard rail - George and I would be bouncin' around. They could never understand how I could sleep until show time. I'd lie up on the bridge, and as soon as I heard the overture I'd wake up and do the show.

Louisa Muston was a crippled woman, got around on crutches. Short, heavyset woman; she had all this money left to her by her father. She hired George and me to open the Louisa Muston Theater. And we opened with *Emperor Jones* - about a nigger who sets himself up as *king*. In Augusta, Georgia! All puppets. Of course, nobody came.

Then George and I broke up, terrible fistfight, smashed the apartment up. We almost had breakdowns. Never friends after that. You're really a monster when you're a kid - you're selfish and nobody can tell you anything. I was infantile, very immature. A spoiled brat. You get told you're a good actor, egotistical shit like that. I must've been impossible.

*****

My nightclub act - Edwin, Griffin, and Milligan. Barbara Griffin and Johnny Edwin - she was a tall, gorgeous redhead, he was five-four. We opened in Buffalo. Three shows a night, last show was one A.M. Twelve-and-a-half-minute marionette act. Song and dance. Wonderful little act.

Played the Borscht Belt for about a year. "Hard-Hearted Hannah" was our opening number. We did it with marionettes, duplicates of us, three feet tall. I made them, I learned all that from George. It was hard to get good engagements. The musicians couldn't read the music; it was too fast, too slow. It wasn't a lot of fun. Drunks were terrible. Taking cigar butts, trying to burn the strings on the marionettes. I just lost interest in the crassness of it all.

I wanted to do everything. I would've loved to be a country-western singer. Years ago I thought of getting into standup comedy, call myself Danny Warbucks. If I had stuck to acting, I'd probably have a star on Hollywood Boulevard. But doing just one thing wasn't enough. That's one of my faults. I like too many things.

I worked for Bil and Cora Baird, the World's Fair. We had the Show-Go-Round in the Chrysler Pavilion. Three-fifty, four-hundred bucks a week - big money then. Four auditoriums and the whole stage would revolve. If you tried to move you could've been squashed in this damn thing turning backstage. I operated this puppet, this fucking Carby Carburetor. It was all on record to a live announcer. "How are you, Carby?" "Oh, I'm fine." "When you buy your next car, it'd better be a Chrysler!" Eight hours of this a day. You really got cuckoo.

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I never really made a decision to be an actor. Something I fell into. Every decision in my life has slid into another. I don't think any decision has ever been plotted out in advance - every one of 'em has been necessity or survival or opportunity.

I was acting as a kid, I guess. When I was fourteen I was in *Outward Bound*. After the Navy I was getting a lot of acting jobs. Went to California, studied theater with Max Reinhardt. Cookie was the teacher in our first class. Lucius Cook, a character man - not a big name, but he used to work all the time. I remember when I did anything he'd say, "What are you doing? What were you doing?" And

I'd say, "Well, I was feeling." And he'd say, "Show me - you didn't show me. Let me see it." It was not the most pleasant thing.

I don't think any acting teacher is any good. You can't teach acting. All you can do is guide somebody. For one thing the word *acting* is wrong - it means to *act*, it means that you're *indicating*. Just the word *acting* is terrible - "Oh, I'm an actor, I act out things." It should be *being*.

In those days everything was live - you do a radio show, a TV show. I played a soda jerk on *What's My Line* for fifteen dollars. My first paying job. Leads in *Armstrong Theater, Studio One, Kraft Theater*. Early live TV. It was wild! If you slipped, there goes the show. Yanking sets out - on rollers - everything was painted green, it seemed to be the best color for black and white. You'd finish a line - "Good-bye!" - and wham! the set would be gone. Wild times.

Archer King was the agent who handled all the juveniles in New York City. And Jimmy Dean was one of 'em. That was before he got into the Studio. He had glasses, very nearsighted, always dressed up in a suit and a tie. A rather nebulous quiet type. Very well spoken - he didn't get into that sloppy diction until he got into the Studio.

Jimmy Dean was cast with me in this TV show, *Keep Our Honor Bright*. We had like thirty juveniles in this damn thing, every juvenile and ingenue in New York City. It was about cheating on an exam. It was the time morality started falling apart in America. Jimmy Dean was the one who had cheated and they expel him from school. The next scene was in the hospital after he had slashed his wrists. Beautifully written.

Well, this is an interesting thing. I was working steadily on all the shows – *Starlight Theater* with Dorothy Gish, *Armstrong Theater* two or three times a year, *Kraft Theater* - all the big stuff. All of a sudden I wasn't workin' on CBS for about eight months. I couldn't understand it. They used to have a casting call - they were cattle calls actually. Every Tuesday they had this open call at one of the theaters, whatever one happened to be dark at the time, Shubert, whatever.

I got this nasty cold shoulder from one of the bigwigs. Finally he says, "Are you Andy Milligan?" I said, "Yes". He said, "I want to talk to you". He took me up to a dressing room and said, "Did you spread around town that the only way to get a job with us is to keep your legs uncrossed and show a basket?" I said, "No, of course not." I practically cried. It was Jimmy Dean who said I had said that. A real shit. Grudge against anybody in his way. He was a masochist, from what I understand. Jimmy Dean was not a nice person.

The Girl on the Via Flamina **was a big hit. I played the American GI; Jose Quintero directed. We were in *Life*, four or five pages on the show. That's where I learned discipline. Jimmy Ray was my understudy in that. I had a habit of always being five or ten minutes late. The stage manager said, "Andy, if you're late one more time, the understudy's going on." And he did - I had to sit in the wings and watch him. I was never late again. Never.**

You really can't go through life wanting to be liked. It's the hardest lesson to learn. Once you say, "Fuck it, I don't care," once you've got that attitude, then it's easy to relax, to talk, laugh, cry, whatever. Didn't happen for me until I did a lot of TV acting.

Acting has to be easy to be good. Acting was very difficult when I was younger. I used to sweat. It was hard, because you're so desperate. When you *want* to be an actor, or want to be anything - a playwright, a painter, anything - if you work too hard at it, you cannot create. Your juices don't flow. You're too wrapped up in trying to do it.

I got bored with acting. This agent was gonna groom me for stardom, had connections with studios, took me to dinner a few times. He told me how to *eat*. I said, "Fuck you!" and walked out.

*****

I got into the rag business. Jim Dahl ran a costume company in Edgecliff, New Jersey. He taught me to make costumes - I learned how to sew from him. Construct, sew, and cut. I decided to open a dress shop. The Ad Lib. I opened the first one uptown on Friday the 13th.

777 Madison, 66th and Madison. That was a couple of years. Then an Ad Lib on Bleecker, then West 4th.

Raffine was later on, Patchen Place in Staten Island. Somebody walked in one day - some Italian woman traveller - and I said, "I don't know what to call the damn shop." She said, "Why don't you call it Raffine?" I said, "What's that?" "It's a slang expression for refined elegance." Oh, I liked that. [*Raffine was a lifelong femme alter ego for Milligan. Nearly all his pictures include the credit "Costumes by Raffine."*]

Why design for women? Well, an artist should be objective. First customer was Bobo Rockefeller. Showed up drunk, stewed to the gills, a real alcoholic. Bought six dresses, ninety-eight dollars apiece. Gave me a check, never came back for them. Two years later they were still there.

I designed for Bloomingdale's. Never got a cent for it. This *cunt* from Bloomingdale's conned me into it. My batwing dresses. We used to turn out two, three hundred batwings. They were just three pieces of fabric. A line hobbled at the bottom. I was known for pegging dresses at the hip, having everything boxy. Very Chanel, but pegging everything. Oriental, that was my style. Our lowest was $24.95, the highest was about $125. The stuff I did then is back in now, like the jacket with no lapels that ties at the hip with a big bow. Siobhan McKennah was one of my clients; Geraldine Page. Did the inauguration gown for Jackie Bouvier's aunt, green silk with gold braid print, eighty bucks.

I never made over a size twelve, by the way. They'd go on diets, come back two weeks later. I made 'em wear gloves and a hat, the whole bit, or they couldn't wear my suits. If they bitched about a fitting, I'd rip the thing off them and throw 'em out "You don't like it? *Fuck* you. Get outta here." I'd tear up the creation; that would really impress people. But that's why I had them. I didn't advertise. They brought in their friends because it was one of a kind - they used to go around town and say, "I know where you got that - the Ad Lib."

Vinnie Ferraro worked for me in the dress shop on Madison Avenue. We were together seven-and-a-half years. Vinnie lived with some guy on 81st, but he was always at my place. We never lived together, just worked together. A wild Indian. Not a very attractive person, like a bear. Hung up on the Catholic religion, but diabolique on the other side. When he drank, he became a different person. He said he'd die before thirty-one and he did. Went out to San Francisco and died of alcoholism.

Still got a scar from where he hit me on the head with a vase. Tried to push me out of a second-story window. I said, "I can't handle it anymore, I don't want to see you." He said, "Oh no, you're not leavin' my life - you belong to me." Oh, I had violent loves, violent hates, violent entanglements. Milligan doesn't love halfway. Women, animals, everything, hee hee. Animals are lovely to be around. People are something else.

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The Caffe Cino was right around the corner from the Ad Lib on 4th Street. There was Joe Cino, and he said, "Whaddaya wanna do?"

2

DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO

Honey, everyone's a little queer, didn't your mother ever tell you?

- ROBBIE, IN MILLIGAN'S *THE BITCH*

MATT BAYLOR EPITOMIZED THE SPIRIT OF THE CAFFE CINO: a free soul, plenty of light and dark. "Matt has the devil in his eyes," Andy Milligan told me. "The innocent child with the devil eyes." But unlike almost everybody involved with the Cino, Baylor survived. How he pulled that one off, I'll never figure out. "I was the observer," said Matt. Basically, he lived like a sparrow - not that it mattered all that much to him. "I lead a grand, gentlemanly life. I'd be the perfect one to live to be a hundred years – I can tell them in 2033 what it was like in the forties."

I never saw Baylor's ancient walk-up exposed to sunlight. He rose in the afternoon and got rolling in the wee wee hours. I visited no earlier than dusk. The bathroom was devoid of light; you just aimed and hoped for the best. Dusty old books were stacked everywhere, piled nearly to the ceiling. "I'm a history freak," said Matt, who had a particular interest in ancient Russian monarchies.

His place was in the middle of Christopher Street, but Matt was disdainful of the street trade. "*Gay* - terrible word. Never called myself that. Good Lord, how frivolous can you get?" The ends of Matt's sentences were always turned up slightly, making him sound forever quizzical about the human condition.

There was nothing frivolous about Baylor. With his longish black hair, strong, sad Bowery Boy face, and an ever-present cap atop his head, Matt had obviously been around the block a time or two, but so what? "Y'know, for an old goat I ain't doin' so bad. I was quite a catch in my day. I'm lucky I have high cheekbones and my age doesn't show. When I go out I take great pains to present myself - I'm not above a little Max Factor and hair dye. What else am I gonna do? Sit in front of the TV set?"

At the moment Baylor's favorite destination was an after-hours bar where an old black dame named Marie banged on the eighty-eights and belted out numbers from decades long past. Every night Matt would dutifully help her carry her bags home from the club. "I go to the Five Oaks 'cause it's a time warp," he whispered with relish. "I always hung out in beer joints - sooner or later I would just wind up in some unswept dump. I could sit alone in a place like that, an Edward Hopper setting ... drinking a cup of coffee and looking like it."

After the fall of Caffe Cino, Matt floated around, working the occasional theater job. For a long time Baylor was personal assistant to Ethyl Eichelberger, a bald, hulking Amish Lower East Side theater legend who specialized in odd roles of either sex. It was hard to ascertain exactly what Matt did these days. "I ruminate," he told me. "I got that line from a Victor Mature picture."

Back in '64 or '65, Baylor also appeared in Andy's very first film – the bathhouse epic *Vapors* - and was an occasional nude stand-in for Milligan's sex scenes. "Extensions, fifty bucks a throw," he recalled. "My ass was photographed more than anybody else's in moving pictures. A cheap bed, soiled sheets. We were all supposed to jump on the bed and writhe." Matt made a pained face. "Nobody got excited. It was a job. It was all over in ten minutes and we got some money. I used to have to practically *beg* Andy for the money.

"I'll never forget what he said to me once - 'Don't worry about what people say about you, Matt. You're makin' a picture this year - when did *they*?'" Baylor had an old, yellowed clipping from the *New York Times* stuck on the wall - a tiny review of Milligan's threadbare 1968 sexploitationer *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me!* - which mentioned Matt's supporting role. "I guess Andy knew picture makin', didn't he?"

Andy Milligan was not exactly Matt's favorite person. "When Andy fixed a little curl on your head, watch out - he was up to something. His dislike of most people was intense. *Too* intense. It was hateful, evil. There was a mean streak in him."

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Matt Baylor was born on Manhattan's Upper East Side, December 17, 1933. "I came out of a ghetto tenement, a slum. My parents were victims of the Depression. My real father, I understood he played piano in speakeasies for drinks. I had a stepfather who resented me. A bastard ... there was always trouble. By the time I was fifteen I was gone."

A former altar boy, Matt now found himself in foster homes, where life wasn't exactly a box of chocolates. "Men have always been puttin' their hands on me. The first time, how old could I have been, seven? I think the janitor was first, the maintenance man. He'd come into the men's room. We'd take one look and start to run. And he'd grab two or three of us 'Here. Play with it, feel it, fool with it.' I saw him one Halloween and he was dressed up as Mae West. ... Who knows what to think?"

Eventually Matt vamoosed, wandering cross-country - "On the road, like Kerouac said." Baylor's been floating in the ozone ever since, and, for as long as I've known him, it's been a solo act. "I am alone, but not lonely," he'd say, matter-of-fact. But there was one in '56: a sailor on leave. Baylor rarely talked about it.

"Gerry, his name was ... He wasn't gay, he came home on leave to see his girlfriends. Nobody had any idea - which, as far as I'm concerned, is the way to do it." Gerry hailed from Ohio. "I went out there to visit him, which was a disaster. A steel town, no place for me. He went away sailin' on a boat, I sat there and waited months at a time."

All Matt got was a busted heart. "He was killed in an automobile accident. Rhode Island, somebody else's car. I was in a furniture store lookin' at the junk and I heard it on the radio - 'Local boy dies in accident.'

"I was devastated. I insured myself for $10,000 and went speeding around the countryside on icy roads thinking I would be gone and everybody would be rich, my mother or somebody. Drunk, speeding on these Ohio back roads, one bar to the next. Don't tell me you don't stay in love".

Matt wound up in Los Angeles. "This guy was into ass shots. We were supposed to be like Roman soldiers, wrestling. It was a crummy studio. Bright lights, mattress on the floor. Guy had a trick over, some beaten-down tall queen. He gave us some money, not much. But don't forget: beers were a quarter."

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Back in New York City, Baylor drifted into the Caffe Cino right before it opened in December 1958. If Broadway was the symphony, the Caffe Cino was garage rock. It took theater away from the hoity-toity and put it in the hands of any poor slob who stumbled into the Cino with a script that didn't bore Joe. Whatever was new, outrageous, and could be gotten away with, Joe Cino wanted to try, consequences be damned. From this tiny coffee house sprang the entire off-Broadway scene, not to mention such play wrights as Lanford Wilson, Tom Eyen, and John Guare. "Before the Caffe Cino, Eugene O'Neill was the only American playwright worth a fig," wrote Paul Foster. "After the Caffe Cino, American theatre dominated contemporary world theatre. Its influences are felt everywhere." A postage-stamp stage, an audience within arm's reach of the actors, and the festering minds of hungry, slightly askew playwrights unsuitable for square fifties New York City: it all added up to some sort of theatrical Molotov cocktail, although in the end the biggest explosion would happen within.

Mattuna, [*Baylor laughed when asked what the moniker meant. "Mattuna - Jewish for gift of the gods, Russian for village idiot. The Cino - they were not kind to people."*] as Matt was nicknamed in the strange lingo Joe Cino and cohort Charles Loubier concocted, acted in few plays and directed none, but he was one of those unique personas key to the Cino's makeup. Baylor's classic profile and street smarts were coveted by Cino denizens. "A very handsome kid. Spectacular looking," said Loubier. "Anything you wanted, he could get it for you ... but underneath it all he was a good little boy."

A good little boy who, on occasion, drank too much and pocketed a knickknack or two. Matt's been known to "borrow" an album only to return it to the stunned owner twenty years later. Typical is the time he lifted a

couple of artworks he'd sold to gallery proprietor and pederast Frank Thompson. "I expected a fair price - not five bucks for the pair, y'know?" said Baylor. "It preyed on my mind. Brooded over it. I got even."

But the jig was soon up for Mattuna. "A knock on the door. It's Frank. 'Oh Matt, I hate to disturb you, but do you by any chance have those needlepoints by the czar of Russia?' I simply reached over, took 'em off the wall and handed them over. He had a *buyer*."

It was at the Cino that Matt first encountered Andy Milligan. Joe Cino would be the first to unleash Andy's peculiar vision on the world. Although ignored completely by most Cino historians and retrospectives, Milligan's shocking stage productions helped create "the myth that the Cino was this wild, dirty, dangerous place," said lighting director Johnny Dodd.

"The real story of the Cino went down *after* closing time," Dodd told me, insisting that Milligan had a dark effect there as well. "Joe Cino loved Andy. For being an outlaw. Mad crazy."

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People never forgot Joe Cino. Let's let the witnesses testify.

Kenny Burgess, artist-in-residence, on his first encounter with Joe: "I said I was a Scorpio. They said, 'So you're a Scorpio? Well, put your cock on the counter.' I thought this was the maddest thing I ever heard. And they asked me again - 'If you can't do that,' Joe said, 'Get OUT!' So I did it. And then I started to cry, I don't know why - I had done worse things by that time. Joe gave me a grenadine - my first grenadine, which would remain my favorite drink - and we became friends."

Jack Delucia, actor: "You could go to Joe with incredible anxiety and in three words you'd be laughing at yourself and feeling great. He had a way of making anxiety dissipate."

Charles Loubier: "Cino had a way of creating a lot of love. It was his nature."

Helen Hamft, actress: "He'd always say to me, 'No matter what problems you have, in this room you're always protected.' A very Italian thing."

Bob Heide, playwright and author: "Joe was the poppa. He had that mysterious quality of being able to bring out the creative in people. There was a genius there."

Ellen Stewart, the La Mama matriarch whom Cino helped get started: "Joe was an angel. He had a heart of gold."

Angelo Levullo, Cino's boyhood friend: "He'd introduce the production wearing a black cape. One time he did it and he opened the cape and he was nude."

Johnny Dodd: "Cino would dabble in anything, he was just sexual. He would get it on with an old, fat woman whore. He would do anything."

Kenny Burgess: "Joe loved the Rockettes. You'd look over and there would be Joe engrossed in hours and hours of baton twirling."

Dodd: "He would call people Jews, micks, and wops. He would say, 'Take this cup of coffee over to that lovely kike over there.' Somebody would say, 'Oh, that's an important theatrical person, Joe.' He didn't care. It was just a provocative way of speaking. If you couldn't take it, you were eliminated. Quickly, ruthlessly, and brutally."

Shirley Stoller, actress: "Joe had a great inner darkness. At night, after all the customers had left, a few of us would be hanging around. Joe would put on the Greek music and he would dance. And no one would speak. It was like a private ritual, very dark and very sad."

Michael Smith, critic: "Cino was a very elusive character. He was very open, pleasant, but he kept his distance in some way."

Hal Borske, actor: "Nobody knew Joe well. Or Andy Milligan."

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Born November 20, 1932, Cino grew up in a traditional Sicilian family in Buffalo, New York. "As a kid he was always interested in acting and

singing," said Angelo Levullo, a few years older than Cino. "He was obsessed with Tallulah Bankhead and Bette Davis. Joe was quite masculine for all his femininity - a very aggressive kid, very outrageous and rebellious. My crowd was always a little conscious of his eccentricity, so he was always picked on and ridiculed, but it didn't bother him."

As a teen, Levullo hit the gay bars with Cino. "I didn't know the ways and he did. He said, 'You see that guy in the black coat? He's gonna come over here and introduce himself because he's interested in you. And when he comes be charming, because we don't have any money and he's gonna pay for our drinks.' It happened *exactly* the way Joe read it. He knew people so well.

"Joe was very sophisticated. ... I mean, in terms of sex he was provocative and prolific - he was having sex before most kids are old enough to come. He was very erotic as a kid. It was dangerous. He knew he couldn't stay in Buffalo."

A plan was hatched to escape to New York City - against his family's wishes. "He wanted to get away from his brothers, who were very hostile," said Levullo. "The last few weeks in Buffalo he lived with his grandmother because his mother didn't want him to be abused by his brothers. They thought they could beat it out of him."

Cino arrived in New York by bus in the middle of a blizzard, February 7, 1948. He was sixteen. "I didn't have a dime," he later said. Supporting himself with a series of odd jobs, Cino studied theater for two years at the Henry Street Playhouse, then concentrated on dance.

Levullo got Joe a job as a typist for the American Laundry Company. It was there that Cino met an older man - "a crazy guy named Ray Mustard, who kind of gave him the little push he needed to open a place on Cornelia Street," said Levullo. Mustard also introduced Joe to amphetamines, allegedly as a diet aid. Weight gain would be the bane of Cino's life. "He danced with Mary Anthony for a long time, but then he got big and you couldn't cast him," said Levullo.

Cino worked weekends as a waiter at the Playhouse Cafe, and it was there he first encountered Charles Loubier. "A wit, an artist, a drunk," as actress Shirley Stoller put it. "The most gorgeous man who ever walked the earth. He would get up and do Greek dancing and we would swoon. Everyone was in love with him."

Even Andy Milligan's eyes glowed when Loubier's name was uttered. When I interviewed Charles in the late eighties at the end of his life - he would succumb to AIDS in 1988 - he struck me as the Cino's suffering saint: a noble, dignified creature, yet decades of self-abuse had put plenty of scar tissue on his soul.

Loubier was engaged in an inexplicable and tempestuous relationship with his wife, Phyliss, nicknamed "Gamma" for eyes that shone like gamma rays when she was angry, which, apparently, was often. "Phyliss was like the iron maiden," said actress Janet Hessler. "Not very friendly. Didn't care about anything but Charles." Their rows were legendary.

Loubier and Cino were occasional lovers, and Charles would function as a "sort of a right arm for Cino," said artist Kenny Burgess. Lighting man Johnny Dodd described Loubier as an "instigator - 'Can't you go *farther* than that?' People would do some super far-out thing and he would say, 'Oh well, not bad.' He kept up with the after-hours events."

Cino - who'd been conjuring up ideas for his own place since 1954 - was alerted to a small space for rent at 31 Cornelia Street by his lover, painter Ed Franzen. It was on a tiny side street between Bleecker and West 4th, hidden from the tourists. Largely Italian, Cornelia Street was, by reason of its location, its own private universe. "A dead street - right in the middle of everything, and yet nobody went there," said Matt Baylor.

In a rare interview with the *Village Voice* (March 1965), Cino recalled finding it. "When I got there, Ed was in conversation with Josie, the landlady, who was hanging out the window with blonde sausage curls. He said, 'This is Mrs. Lemma.' I said, 'Oh, you're Italian.' She said, 'Yes, what are you?' I said, 'Sicilian.' So she said, 'I don't even have to come down, I'll throw the keys.' "

Using $400 he'd saved from working at the Playhouse, Joe opened Caffe Cino in December 1958. They made exactly "a quarter the first day," recalled Loubier. Stills of the imperious Bette Davis, actors' headshots, Kenny Burgess's obtuse, colorful collages, and whatever odd found objets d'art struck Joe's fancy were tacked hastily to the walls of the long, dark room - which might hold sixty at best - in some coffeehouse approximation of chaos. "The interior of the Caffe Cino has the aroma of a moldering but still ecstatic amusement park about to be demolished," wrote Bob Heide.

Joe Cino had no plan. "My idea was always to start with a beautiful, intimate, warm, noncommercial, friendly atmosphere where people could come and not feel pressured or harrassed," he said. "I also thought anything could happen. I knew a lot of painters, so my thought immediately was, I'll hang all their work. I was thinking of a cafe with poetry readings, with lectures, maybe with dance concerts. The one thing I never thought of was fully staged productions of plays."

But poetry readings begat Sunday night play readings, the first of which was *No Exit*, done "with three chairs and three scripts," said Cino. "The room was packed, but I didn't even think of doing it again. ... I didn't want to disturb the rhythm of the room." A press notice lists the first theatrical production as taking place on February 4, 1960, although Matt Baylor insisted the first show with actual costumes and sets was a production of *Tea and Sympathy* that summer, which starred himself alongside soon-to-be Milligan superstars Maggie Rogers and Peter Ratray. Also that summer came James Howard's *Flyspray*, the first original play. The Cino increased its performances to twice nightly by January 1961, and soon afterward a one A.M. show was added on weekends.

"The next play might be about whores and naked boys - and here we were without curtains on the windows," said Loubier. "It was kind of far out. By 1960 we were getting manuscripts. It had been all by word of mouth - we had no idea. The spontaneity of it is what made it. People would serve you coffee and then they'd be on the stage."

The power structure in New York City made it practically impossible to do anything outside the norm in theater at all. "Police bothered us, equity,

firemen ... Joe was sort of casual about those things," said Loubier. Legend has it that both Cino and Loubier serviced at least one cop on the Caffe Cino beat.[*"I used to see Joe slip bills to some of the cops," wrote Robert Patrick. "Others he'd take in the back and they'd come out red-eyed and sniffing, or zipping their flies. The cops never bothered us while Joe was alive."*]

Cino theater had "elements of kids putting on a play in a garage," said playwright Bob Heide. Cino never received grant money, and the lack of funds forced creative thinking. "You were so limited in Cino," said Jack Delucia. "Imagination was everything, budgets were nothing."

Many forgettable productions came and went. "It was not all glitter and glamour," recalled Matt Baylor. "A lot of the plays were dreary - Cino would whisper to me 'beja, beja,' which meant garbage. We'd sit drinking vodka in espresso cups, praying that by Saturday an audience would show up."

But everyone got a chance. "Joe did good things, he did bad things, but he was faithful," said Bob Dahdah. "If he booked you for a week, you played a week, no matter how bad you were." "Even if there was no audience, he'd say, 'You have to do it for the room,'" said Helen Hamft, who credited Joe with supplying "tremendous creative freedom. Everything was all right with him."

Only eight by eight, the stage was within reach of the small audience, which made for intimate and sometimes intense theater. "There was always opera lurking around as the inspiration for things," said Michael Smith. "And the contrast between opera and a little tiny place like that was so extreme ... they were actually after that level of performance intensity."

Played between performances was "whatever music that would offend everybody the most," claimed Johnny Dodd. "Grand opera might follow Mick Jagger, and then we might have bouzouki music or Kate Smith, Maria Callas. ... For the audience, it was torment."

"There was this incredible grandiosity about everything," said actress Lucy Silvay Peluso. "There was an interior decorating style that ran through all

the Cino apartments. Mirrors were very important. There were mirrors everywhere, all over the Cino."

It was a mad, crazymaking anthill, protected from the world by queen Cino. "You didn't talk a lot about outside lives," said playwright Robert Patrick. "At the Cino, that wasn't real." Outsiders were excluded. "I felt like there was some sort of secret code there that I couldn't penetrate at all," recalled critic Michael Smith. Contributing to that feeling was Cinaka, an arcane language invented by Cino and Charles Loubier.

"It was based, legitimately enough, on how Sicilians spoke English," Loubier explained. "Most of the nouns were pure Italian words." Cinaka became a whole secret way of talking. 'Ella's in a jet' meant he or she was in a black mood. *Cukaya* referred to "anybody whose behavior was indicative of a full moon," said painter John India. Regulars received Cinaka nick names - Mattuna, Traversa, Gamma. On it went.

"The language got very complex - no one had a technique to teach it, because there was no order to it," said Levullo."*Ella* could stand for a lot of things - her, he, or it - and it had an adverbial quality, too.

"There was a Jewish girl named Diane that Joe was attracted to. She was always trying to get something in a scheming way, and Joe admired her for having the balls to try it. Later, after knowing Diane, whenever he would meet a Jewish person - usually a woman who would have the same qualities about her - he would say, 'She's very diane.' That meant 'She's very Jewish.' Then when he wanted to use an adjective – Jewishlike - he would use dianistic. That's how words came about."

A few definitions, by way of Charles Loubier's dictionary:

"*Hungazza, hungka*: a very desirable number meant for eternal love or at least until the next hungazza comes along."

"*Cumma vaca*: women, because of vacuum cleaner-like tendencies."

"*Phonaca*: phony."

"*Phonaca* was the worst thing you could be," said Johnny Dodd. "Everything else was OK, but not *that*."

The Cino was not for lightweights. "It was like being stripped naked," said John India. "There was no place you could hide, nothing you could hide from one another. It was brutal. It was a group therapy kind of thing *all the time*. Nobody got away with anything. No one. You got a few bruises. It made the rest of our lives dull - Warhol, the Studio, there was nothing after that. Nothing."

Phyliss Loubier continued, "At the Cino, you took life on all its levels, everything you could possibly do. No one was afraid of life."

But, as Matt Baylor put it, "there was an undercurrent of destruction to it all."

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The Cino came together in a weird interim period - "after beatniks[*Charles Loubier recalled Jack Kerouac's rather amusing run-in with Cino denizens at a party. "We had the Greek records on and were dancing. This handsome head peeped around the corner and said, 'Oh - Greek faggots.' So we danced with him."*] on the eve of hippies," said Jack Delucia. "We were coming from the pressure cooker of the sixties, and the Cino was a tremendous release," said Robert Patrick. "You must understand there was no off-off-Broadway movement - there was Joe Cino. Without Joe, nothing that is interesting in American theater would've happened. Certainly people like Lanford Wilson and John Guare would not have written as they wrote. People like Harry Koutoukas and Tom Eyen might never have gotten to write at all."

As Angelo Levullo put it, "It was all kinda new. This was a new youthful group breaking all kinds of barriers culturally, theatrically, even sexually. Kids at the Cino were proud of being queens - not like our generation, where you hid everything behind closed doors."

"Cino was not a place where people were repressed, and nobody could stay repressed very long," insisted Robert Patrick. "Joe said, 'Do what you have

to do.' And he meant it."

Although largely male and homosexual, the Cinoites were a different breed from the stereotypical gay theatrical crowd. "A certain masculinity was prized there," stated Matt Baylor. In Cinaka, a very queenish male was referred to as *Minnuka*. "It came from Minnie and was used pejoratively. There were a bunch of creative sissies around the Cino, but no sissy drag shows. I never heard anybody in that place screaming 'Mary!'"

"Everybody came down to Cino's - straight, gay," maintained Loubier, recalling with fondness one 3rd Street stripper who'd totter in after her shift and pop her breasts out on top of the counter. "She'd say, 'Oh, I've been working all night - mind if I rest these here?'"

Across the street from Cino's was their watering hole, Mona's Royal Roost, run by one Mona Katz, an older Jewish woman with a penchant for garish fashion. A few doors down from Mona's was the Thompson Gallery, run by the notorious Frank Thompson, who would play a tangential but important role at the Cino.

"Frank represented the ultimate decadence," said Johnny Dodd. "He was our Cocteau." Born in 1907, Frank Thompson - a.k.a. "the Festering Violet" - opened his gallery on Cornelia Street in 1956. Thompson was a "remittance man," as Martin Reymert put it, "paid to stay out of town" by his wealthy Florida family.

Thompson hung some of his nudes in the Cino and "he was always around," said Johnny Dodd, adding that Joe got a big kick out of Thompson's den of sin. "The front room would be very tasteful high art, but oooh, there might be an oil painting from 1700 of little boys taking a swim. Then down in the cellar was this huge porno collection from the forties. The back room was where the little boys would be, and the party would go all night."

"It was a scene, definitely a scene," Martin Reymert concurred. Patrons in the know could shell out for Thompson's *Drawing the Male Nude* - pictures of young naked males alongside hasty reinterpretations in charcoal - or his homoerotic porno stories, individually pounded out on an ancient

typewriter. "They weren't even mimeographed," said Reymert. "It was the real stuff."

Anything could be had at the gallery. "Hot and cold running boys, porno, drugs - whatever you wanted, there it was," said Reymert. "The reason I stayed away from Thompson Gallery wasn't because I wasn't interested, it was because it was *dangerous!"* "Thompson had every one of the youngsters who grew up on that block - and their fathers before them," said set designer Joe Davies. "Why he wasn't left for dead we never knew."

An endless stream of wayward youth found its way to Thompson Gallery, neighborhood gypsies as well as kids like Paul Palmotto and "Baby" Bobby Siefker. "That nice priest from New Jersey brought them out of the closet, and we were all one big happy family," stated Thompson cheerfully. Paul later overdosed in Thompson's apartment, and Baby Bobby would get the shit kicked out of him in one of Andy Milligan's early plays.

A withered pudgy southern auntie with the hair of a poodle and the complexion of a turnip, Thompson was a cold, amoral reptile. Matt Baylor and I paid a visit to Thompson one night not long before his death, still shuffling around in the Cornelia Street apartment he'd occupied for decades. The dusty palace was stuffed with his beloved "art" - mostly his tasteless paintings and porcelain figures of nude young boys. Thompson's current obsession involved somehow restoring the foreskin on his circumcized cherub statues.

Although one got the feeling that any sexual activity on his part was a dim, distant memory, Thompson was as brazen as ever in his love of underage boys and cheerfully admitted to keeping adolescent jism samples in his fridge to add to his omelettes. "Twelve-year-old orgasms always improve the flavor," he droned, proudly declaring his charter membership in the National Man/Boy Love Association and peppering his nonstop monologue with such showstoppers as "The family that plays together stays together" and "I don't have any lovers over seventeen."

"Tell it to the judge, Frank," cracked Matt, amazed and amused that the same chenille bedspread still graced Thompson's bed nearly three decades

later. [*Improbably enough, Thompson was briefly married - to Donna Whitfield, a beautiful blonde who starred in Milligan's* Torture Dungeon.]

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As Johnny Dodd had maintained, the real story of the Caffe Cino - long obscured by the famous talent it birthed - was that of the misfit family of regulars that lived the tale. "Cino liked odd people around and about," said Baylor.

Early on came an adult crowd transplanted for the most part from the Playhouse - among them a Greek accordian player named Asterious Metakous; Taka Nakano, a Japanese woman who occasionally waited tables; painter John India; Esther Travers, a somewhat eccentric nearsighted older dame who was a link to the bohemia of New York past; and a voluptous French / Russian woman named Nanoosh de la Motte.

Of Lebanese descent, the dour, bushy-eyebrowed Bob Dahdah loved old Hollywood musicals and was responsible for one of the Cino's biggest hits, *Dames at Sea*. "Dahdah was quite mad in his own quiet way," said Johnny Dodd, who recalled that even when the Cino turned into a druggy death trip, "Bob Dahdah kept right on through the horror, carrying a couple of shopping bags with a show in them."

Joe Davies - a.k.a. the High Cukaya - arrived at the Cino at its inception. Barrel-chested, bursting with nervous energy, and sporting a white cotton-candy beard that somehow looked pornographic, Davies resembled a lusty, amphetamined Santa from Dimension X. He had a knack for creating stupendous sets out of nothing. "He did the sets for *South Pacific* in two days," said Matt Baylor. "Day and night, no sleep, no eating - it looked like an acid trip, the work of a lunatic."

In addition to this thirties-and-older crowd, the Cino also attracted a younger, wilder group, personified by a Midwestern trio - Johnny Dodd, Kenny Burgess, and Dean Selmier.

Andy Milligan and Johnny Dodd were archenemies - Milligan sputtered bile at the mere mention of his name. Dodd, however, seemed to relish a

chance to immortalize Andy, if only to demonize him completely. Johnny cracked me up. He was a devil himself - one who could utterly charm you, even when his little red pitchfork was sticking out of your back.

Small, blond, and beautiful, Johnny Dodd was born in New Orleans, then spent a tumultuous youth in Indiana. "My father threw me out of Terre Haute for having an affair with a priest - he found these love letters, they were real graphic. Dad really liked this priest, too." The priest deposited Dodd in the much more cosmopolitan Indianapolis, where he stumbled upon a Bohemian downtown scene centered around a quiet, pill-popping artist named Kenny Burgess.

Burgess was one of Andy Milligan's favorites, and the pair would night crawl New York City together looking for anonymous sex. Kenny was a kind, slightly daffy, almost ethereal soul, the sort who could remain innocent even while sucking off strangers in the crowded caboose of an abandoned truck.

At the time Dodd met him, Burgess was inhabiting an ancient Italianesque villa-turned-rooming house called the Carolina Club, "which at nine in the morning had a full-fledged party going on," said Dodd. "That's where I first saw a drag queen. Cleaning up in sort of half-undress, listening to opera at deafening, deafening volumes. She had white hair and pale yellow green makeup like a mask on her face. I went inside and said, 'How come you guys look like this?' They said, 'Why do you think?' I said, 'Are you from the circus?' And they all laughed. They said, 'Where are you going?' I said, 'High school.' They said, 'Why don't you come with us?'"

Dodd did, immediately discovering how temperamental Burgess could be. One day he praised a big oil painting of Kenny's depicting a crucifixion. "I said, 'God, that's really beautiful.' Kenny looked at me really funny – like 'stop praising it' and then he took a matte knife and slashed it to ribbons, right in front of my face. And threw me out!'"

In 1959, Dodd fled to New York City with an outrageous character named Dean Selmier. An abrasive, macho actor out of the Brando school, Selmier rode a motorcycle and kept a pet monkey. He also purported to have ties to

the underworld (he wrote a novel about his alleged exploits as a hit man, *Blow Away*. Recalled Dodd with a laugh, "If you went somewhere with him you had to do these espionage things. Take a taxi up to 23rd Street, jump in another ..."). Selmier would later legally change his name to Quasimodo due to a lifelong fascination with the hunchback. "I used to make people meet me out front of Notre Dame when I lived in Paris," he admitted cheerfully.

Selmier made quite an impression on the Cino crowd. "We were walking down the street and a couple of gay guys were staring at him," recalled Kenny Burgess, who soon joined Dodd and Dean in New York City (and would design posters for Cino shows for a meager take of the opening night door). "Dean just opened his fly and took out his joint and said, 'Is this what you want?' Right in front of St. Joseph's Church! The queens just got so nervous trying to get a good look, but trying to flee because it was still daylight. Dean was too much."

"Dean was a very hot guy," said Dodd. "He would say the most awful things to people, like going way past telling some woman her makeup was shitty - 'I hated your play, I hated your performance in it.' I liked him because he was so unafraid of everything. ... He came to the Cino to play the cruel clown." Selmier's rough-trade appeal would fuel one of Andy Milligan's first Cino productions, Genet's *Deathwatch*.

Dodd and Selmier shared an infamous railroad apartment at 5 Cornelia Street. On its ceiling were flying musclemen sporting angel's wings painted by Burgess. Selmier painted his room like a cave and had a firehouse pole in the middle for his monkey to climb. "Johnny had an altar with his own picture," remembered actress Janet Hessler. "He used to swipe stuff from local churches." The shutters were nailed to the wall and painted, like just about everything else, black. "No daylight in it at all," said Michael Smith, who later lived at Dodd's. "It was dark and mysterious. You couldn't tell who was there. It was amazing what would go on."

While wandering the city streets in his black cape soon after his arrival in New York, Dodd happened upon the Caffe Cino. "I said to Dean, 'I found this place that puts on plays!' I had never seen a play, in fact." Dodd -

christened La Gnoma in Cinaka due to his diminutive presence - grew very tight with Joe Cino and became the Cino's lighting director, developing a widely influential style. "We were so close to the audience that Johnny's lights were what separated us," said Robert Patrick. "Every time I go to a Broadway show I see Johnny's lights. Blatantly theatrical, almost baroque he used lights the way people used music. An exquisite artist."

A lover of sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll, few characters are more controversial in Cino history than Dodd. "I *loved* Johnny Dodd," said Charles Loubier. "He looked like a young Alain Delon. Johnny had long hair then, which was in no way the style. And he looked like an innocent little kid, which was in no way the truth."

"Johnny looked like a cherub angel, but there was a demon inside," said playwright Bob Heide. Prone to temper tantrums, Dodd got in rows with everyone, particularly if they were telling him how to do his job. Heide casually mentioned he'd like his play highlighted with a bit of red for Valentine's Day; for the next performance Dodd had the whole show lit in red.

"You couldn't put a finger on it, but there was a sinister quality to his character," recalled Taka Nakano. "He was jealous, didn't want people to get close to Cino." "Dodd had this awful violent side to him," said actress Helen Hamft, whom Dodd once physically attacked during an argument at the Cino. "He was very sneaky and would hide behind Joe's apron strings. I never trusted him."

Dodd appealed to both boys and girls and by all accounts made the most of it. "Johnny Dodd would do little tricks with women," said Joe Davies. "He'd take 'em upstairs to fuck 'em and there'd be fifteen guys there. Evil, malevolent ..."

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A tiny theater, a motley bunch of characters with the sixties detonating all around them. Into this rarefied atmosphere came Andy Milligan, guns blasting. No one is certain when Andy, a key part of the Cino's first wave, arrived. "Everybody who belonged at Cino's found it," said Loubier.

"People would just appear. One day Milligan. He had a dress shop around the corner." Nobody knew much about Milligan's background then, and it would stay that way. "Andy was very secretive about his past," said longtime partner Gerry Jacuzzo. "There was always something you didn't get to share. ... A very peculiar person. Full of unanswered questions. Loose ends."

But three things inevitably came to mind when I asked Cino people about Andy Milligan. He had a vicious hatred for his overweight mother. He was a sadist. And the violence in his productions seemed all too real.

3

GENTLEMAN'S HANDSHAKE

Cruelty is remembered and appreciated. ... History doesn't remember the good deeds one does ... only the bad. ... They are the history makers, those that do horrendous deeds.

They are the remembered ones. ...

- WILLIAM, IN MILLIGAN'S *COCTEAU*

BOB DAHDAH GREW A BIT PALE recalling Andy Milligan's Cino productions. There was that finale of *The Two Executioners*, where actress Ellen Maris poured sand into the wounds of her dying husband. "His body was offstage, and the screams he let out in the bathroom of the Cino were so loud, so terrifying, so horrifying that police cars came to almost all the performances. Andy wanted everybody to know this woman had really tormented this guy. Every performance would be filled with screams. Tone it down? Andy wanted more, more. I always thought he was doing something to this guy to make him scream like that. Screams that could be heard in hell."

Even more upsetting was the climax of Milligan's production of Lord Dunsany's *The Glittering Gates*, in which Neil Flanagan knocked around one of Frank Thompson's young charges, "Baby" Bobby Siefker. "He was pummelled, beaten, knocked down, kicked, dragged, rolled, circled, twisted, crushed," said Dahdah. "It was the most horrible thing, because they were really doing it to this kid! I don't know how he took this torture. Then the play ended, because he was supposed to be dead. And he got up to take a bow, and he got up like coming back from the dead - wracked with pain, untwisting his body. I thought, 'If he does that twice a night, I don't know how he's gonna live.' That kid was beaten within an inch of his life. Oh, how they pummeled that child!"

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Andy Milligan wandered into the Caffe Cino around 1960. "Andy looked like a cute Irish gamin - all he needed was a cap and newspapers and he'd be the classic newsboy of another era," remembered Charles Loubier. "Shy he wasn't." Milligan possessed a shock of red hair, owlish eyebrows, and scruffy whiskers - alongside a rather ominous scar piercing the right cheek of his pink Irish face. His jowls and borderline buck teeth sometimes gave him the appearance of an evil Bugs Bunny. Bob Dahdah recalled casting him in a pre-Cino play in which a reviewer said, much to Andy's displeasure, that he "resembled the rear end of a dead rabbit hanging upside down in a 9th Avenue butcher shop."

The Ad Lib dress shop on West 4th was a scene unto itself. Minette, an ageless, sparrowlike drag queen, worked as "stitch bitch" while Milligan threw fat women out of the store and argued with everyone else. "Andy never wanted to sell his clothes," said employee JoAnne Proccocino. "He'd get upset if they wanted to buy them. He used to jump up and down. 'Dammit! That bitch bought my dress!'"

Milligan's way with a needle and thread impressed the Cino crowd. Playwright Robert Patrick recalled telling Andy how he was desperate for a bit of haute couture to outfit one of the female leads in that night's play. "Andy went home, came back with a big square of black and white fabric, and told the girl, 'Take off your clothes.' And he wrapped this fabric around her and made what I swear was a Golanus gown. I mean, not one cut in it - he just wrapped it around her with incredible deftness. She looked like a million dollars."

This was no fey West Village dressmaker. He was fast talking, brash - a cantankerous provocateur involved in a zillion projects at once. And he wasted no time making enemies. "Andy offended *lots* of people," said director Jim Perkinson. "It was one of his great virtues. He was *always* in hot water." Said Joe Davies, "We loved him, but we all hated him."

Just before Milligan came to the Cino he had been out on the road with a theater company - The Sullivan Street Players - doing evenings of Oscar Wilde and Shakespeare. These would be his first productions at the Cino and would utilize the acting talents of Sullivan Street player Neil Flanagan.

"One of the shining stars of the firmament," as Matt Baylor put it, Flanagan had legitimate theatrical experience. "He brought class to the joint."

Flanagan directed and starred in a production of *Candide* that was an early Cino hit, and he was the lead in Lanford Wilson's much-loved ode to an aging drag queen, *The Madness of Lady Brite*, first put on in May 1964 and revived many times since. [*Milligan absolutely hated* The Madness of Lady Brite. *"It was distasteful," he said, looking completely offended. "Couldn't stand sitting through it ... a faggot going on about tricks."*] Flanagan would contribute preposterous performances to many a Milligan movie as well. The two of them were seasoned vets of the theater world, and their presence had a marked effect on the Caffe Cino group. "We were just American kids of the fifties," said Robert Patrick. "We had no education, we didn't know anything about the history of off-Broadway, we felt no connection to the commercial theater, whereas Andy and Neil did. They brought expertise and professionalism, a bedrock standard to maintain."[*In the nineties, Patrick - best known for his play* Kennedy's Children - *published a graphic novel based on the Cino entitled* Temple Slaves. *Milligan, who appears briefly as the character Nate, was outraged by the book, calling it a "cheap pulp faggot novel" and decried Patrick's "asexual sexuality. He's not involved. It's cold - there's no heart, no pathos." As far as being about the Cino, Milligan felt the book was "fantasy."*]

But Andy Milligan brought more than professionalism to the Cino - he brought a certain depravity. For what appears to be his first Cino production - of two one-act plays in January 1961 - Milligan reached back to a pair of dusty works, Lord Dunsany's *The Glittering Gates* and Yeats's *Purgatory*, presenting them as bleak, nearly medieval affairs. Milligan directed at least nine productions at the Cino in 1961-62, and they all contain themes that gripped Andy throughout his life. "We looked at him with peculiar eyes," said actor Wally Androchuck. "His choice of plays were all kind of sadistic." Genet's *Deathwatch* - along with Tennessee Williams's sympathetic portrait of a jailed male hustler, *One Arm* - allowed Andy to exploit the rougher side of male homosexuality. Eugene O'Neill's *Before Breakfast* centers on a neurotic wife whose nonstop yammering drives her husband to commit suicide offstage at the end of the play. *The Two*

Executioners was written by Spanish absurdist Fernando Arrabel and was full of, as Dodd put it, "abstract violence, the color red, blood-red roses, a crucified Christ, and somebody being executed for no apparent reason." Milligan also put on *Amongst Dummies* by the very obtuse Pagoon, who wrote "difficult plays - ceremonial, ritual, abstract, weird, and creepy. You couldn't get to the point of them. A violence, and a kind of existential empty heartache of general life."

Milligan's productions were fast-paced to the point of mania. "Anything that Andy directed would *move*," said Loubier. "He was a fierce director," said Kenny Burgess. "Andy went for the throat. His plays were relaxed, but then, all at once, they would build like a cobra striking out. He knows how to direct hysteria."

The no-budget restraints of the Cino fit Milligan's vision.

"His strong point is he can create something out of nothing," said playwright Paul Foster, who'd work with Milligan at La Mama. "*Deathwatch, The Maids* - they were ideally suited for small spaces. I never thought he was a director for a great budget. He was very good at scavenging - if you had an old rag, that was the costume; if you had an old candle, that was the prop. He could make it work when everybody else would turn up their noses at it. He really understood that what shines through is the spirit of the piece, not the expensive accoutrements. It was the capacity to tell a story. In that sense he is truly an Irishman."

Milligan's unsettling productions of two 1954 Jean Genet plays - *The Maids* and *Deathwatch* - remain indelible for many. "I can see those plays as vividly in my mind's eye as when they first opened, and that was thirty years ago," said actor Jack Delucia. A thief, prostitute, and ex-con, Genet wrote plays whose flagrant and violent sexual spectacles were just the ticket for Andy Milligan.

The Maids opened in July 1961, starring Ellen Maris and an older Canadian woman named Maggie Rogers who later would often appear in Milligan films as an evil matriarch. Delucia remembered Genet's odious portrayal of Sapphic love as "romantically conceived" by Milligan, who filled the

postage-stamp stage with what would become a Milligan trademark: blood red bouquets. "Every night a hundred fresh roses ... the Cino was reeking of these flowers." The incongruity of the stylish production and the brutality of the characters made for fascination and discomfort. "You're looking at these very soft reds, peaches, a wonderful French vanity - soft shapes and beautiful colors - and yet this horrible story was taking place."

Milligan zeroed in on the friction between the two female leads. "At one point I dropped a glove, and I just stood there and forced her to go down and pick it up," recalled Ellen Maris. "Andy loved that." It was a shocking production for 1961. "Milligan did it like the original," said Charles Loubier. "Where the one girl practically goes down on the other."

Audiences found it unrelenting. "*The Maids* made people leave the room, including me," recalled Johnny Dodd. "They were really beating each other up, like for real. And I don't know how much they were ever really liking it. It scared me, made me sick to my stomach." Dodd fled for the bathroom and tried to wait it out, but even when he returned, "They were still screaming at each other."

Deathwatch opened a few months later, on October 19, 1961. It was another stunner. Macho hunks Dean Selmier and future Warhol star Louis Waldon performed in the homoerotic prison play alongside Robin Narc. "Andy was serious, and, baby, he did *Deathwatch* for all time as far as I'm concerned," said Charles Loubier. "S&M of the highest order. Andy made the costumes, which were very thin white muslin - I mean, they were practically nude - they'd wrestle and fight, hang off the bunks. They threw each other all over the stage."

Johnny Dodd recalled Milligan's *Deathwatch* as "savage - all the other Genet productions I've done, everybody's tried to get where Andy seemed to be easily. That was an erotic play. E-rot-ic. The actors in *Deathwatch* weren't gay at all, yet the shit Andy made them do - actually touching each other. And violent. That, coupled with this sensual Genet language, was very exciting."

Milligan's productions were not only exciting but often downright deadly. Dahdah recalled one of the numerous occasions when Milligan went too far. One of the leads bolted from the stage after a performance of *The Maids*. "She was fuming. She went out and slammed the door of the Cino - I thought the glass was gonna break. I said, 'She seems to be annoyed at something.' And Andy said, 'Oh, she's mad because Maggie really hit her with the whip tonight.' I said, 'Didn't you choreograph it so she wouldn't be hit?" He said, 'Oh, no - it's up to her to dodge the whip.'

"There were no holds barred - it was really done," continued Dahdah. "If there was a fight, you knew it was gonna be real. There was no choreography." Actor Wally Androchuck concurred. "In *The Two Executioners*, my mother has to slap me, and Milligan really wanted whacks. Even the audience gasped. He wanted 100 percent the real thing - and he got it."

Vernon Newman was tied to a pole and carried off in the play. One night he was dropped, badly skinning his back. Newman was sure that Andy had done it on purpose. Bobby Siefker admitted that Milligan encouraged Neil Flanagan to be "a little on the violent side" during the production of *The Glittering Gates*. "He did whack me around."

"Andy enjoyed it when somebody got slapped onstage," Joe Davies insisted. "He'd be delighted, high, *enthralled*. During *Two Executioners* somebody supposedly broke their arm, and I think he got off on the fact that he got away with it in front of the audience - that he could have somebody break their arm or get the shit kicked out of them. It was the height of cruelty. I'd have big fights with him. I'd say, 'That's not creativity, that's not art, that's something else. Gladiator sport.' He'd laugh, 'Hey, Joe, c'mon, it's no big deal. They're big boys and girls. They'll live through it.'"

During a performance Milligan would hover in the shadows, staring, transfixed by his own creations. Cino and others got a big kick out of watching Andy watch. As Johnny Dodd remembered, "There would be characters kicking and slapping each other around, screaming, 'You dirty bitch, lick my shoe!' And when they got to the peak of it, there would be Andy, a little smile on his face. He would be in a trance, a Cheshire cat

trance. We always thought he had orgasms watching. The heavy breathing, the glazed over eyes, the mouthing of the words. It was scary." [*Davies recalled walking home with Milligan one night while Andy playfully taunted him, pinching his nipples. "I got so mad I actually kicked him - and when I kicked him, he had an orgasm, actually had an orgasm. He enjoyed it when a spark flew."*]

Scary, perhaps - but Milligan was canny enough to realize his personal obsessions struck a chord in the real world. Delucia recalled one scene in which Selmier was "lying down on this cot, and he's having this talk with a priest. He pulls his pants right down to the crack in his ass, and Johnny Dodd pulled the lighting way back. You saw what you saw - and you could imagine even *more* if you wanted to. Milligan would sit in the back - you'd see him grinning, his teeth shining in the dark - and he would say, 'Look at them, the little bastards, they're eating this up.' He was right. People had stopped drinking their cappuccino and had their eyes glued to Dean's ass."

A Milligan show would pack the Cino - and, at times, empty the seats. "People came and they also left - indignantly." Dodd witnessed audience members "having arguments - 'How dare you call this theater! This isn't theater, this is perversion!' Other people had their lives changed by this experience - that you could go this far." Even Dodd. He admitted that as much as he and Milligan clashed, Andy was a big influence. "By coming to the conclusion it was theatre - and it really was - that made me accept a million other things."

Dodd also believed that Milligan's extreme productions cleared out Cino dead weight. "There were a lot of people who left the scene because of Andy. It was too far out for some people, especially the musical comedy types. Andy got rid of a lot of them for us. It shifted gears. Set a standard for how far you can go - which was nearly killing people!

"Andy might've killed somebody onstage - and he would've sat there and watched it. And dug it!" A crocodilian smile overtook Dodd's still-boyish face. "The other mad part is Cino would've let him. Cino especially liked this kind of madness. He didn't believe in a good show - he believed in making people crazy."

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***DEATHWATCH* - THE FIRST ONE TO SHOW PEE-PEES, HAHAHA. Really revolutionary. The kids fought me, they wanted to wear jockstraps. "No, no, you gotta wear this muslin." This was before *Hair* and all that. Dicks were flopping, girls were fainting. They all wanted Robin Narc. looked like a young Brando. A real man, not fake.**

Maurice is a homosexual queen and Lefranc is a thief. Greeneyes is in there because he killed his girlfriend - the ultimate orgasm is to kill her during ejaculation. Love you so much I could kill you. That's the Genet thing. Genet goes back to De Sade. Genet actually knew people like this.

At the Cine the audience was right on top of the actors. We had these double bunks on each side. I had the actors in heavy chains. God, was it noisy. Worst thing I could've done was put them in chains, but for the Cine it was right. If you create and go with your instincts, you'll always come out avant garde.

***The Maids* was based on an actual case of two lesbian sisters in Paris. And they were S&M lovers on top of it, these two maids. They're in love with their Madame, but they want to kill her because she's got all this and they've got nothing - it's the old class thing. Claire is the femme, Solange is the butch. In these little black crow getups, like Edith Piaf. Black dress, stockings, white collars.**

And they'd say things like, "I love you, I hate you" - complete split personality. I had Solange laid out in this wonderful white satin round bed and they're in black and she says, "We can't do this every night, we can't go on like this," and the lights are coming down - low blue lights, moonlit, very exotic. I really made the Cino lush sets. And all of a sudden Maggie crawls over her on her knees - and lays her head in the other one's crotch and starts sniffing! The girls in the audience used to throw up during the lesbian scenes. They couldn't take it.

The actresses would really beat the shit out of each other, every night. And when they came offstage – panting - we'd pour glasses of water on

them, they'd dehydrate that much.

Fifty-five minutes. Hysterical pitch. *The Maids* and *Deathwatch* cannot be played in an hour and a half; they gotta be played in under sixty minutes, because Genet writes subconscious and conscious together. Most actors play the subconscious as conscious lines and it doesn't work. It's usually done wrong, they stretch it out, like syrup. I can't stand to see them done slowly, and they're always done that way. They try to make *theory* and there's nothing there.

Genet never, *ever* wanted *The Maids* to be played by men. That's a complete fallacy. He wasn't into that shit. He *hated* women - except for women's roles. He was into real men, not some faggots dressing in drag.

***The Two Executioners* was very shocking. I think we were the first ones to do Arrabel in the city. The mother castrates the husband and tells their boys the father's nothing. She turns him in to the Spanish Inquisition and they kill him. And he's brought in hanging - handcuffed over a pole - bleeding from the mouth. I had blood bags with grape juice so he really bled onstage. Quite effective. We used to drag him through the Cino, and there they were with their sweets and drinks, blood dripping everywhere, hee hee.**

That was right after *Purgatory*, by Yeats. Very sick little play. Neil Flanagan was the old grandfather. Poor Neil. It was summer and we put him in forty pounds of makeup - a hump. Little kid was gonna become sexually active, so Neil kills him. Every night Neil would stab the kid to death. We used to slap the shit out of him. He was a masochistic little queen, so he didn't care, hee hee. He'd go out afterward and take his bow. He *loved* it.

I didn't beat actors! Are you kidding? Those actors - Dean, Lou? I was into very realistic stuff. This is what they had never seen in New York. That's what brought in Jerome Robbins and all the uptowners. Robbins came every night to *Deathwatch*.

Everybody has their own version of the Cino. We were the melting pot. Really quite diverse. The bruising of all these different characters

together - they were sparks. We were all strange, all aloof.

New York was a police state, an absolute police state. Wagner was just absolutely brutal, a terrible mayor - the payoffs and the entrapments, throwing artists out of their lofts because they were living illegally. You need to know the political structure of the city at that time to realize how hard it was to make an artistic movement out of the sixties. People came out of very adverse circumstances.

We bent the law so much. All those shows weren't supposed to be done and we just did 'em - by the time word got around, it had closed. We just stole. Pirated anything we felt like doing. All you had to do is get in there, do your show, and get out. One day to set up - Sunday night - we opened on Monday and ran through Sunday. Friday, Saturday night, really packed, smoky. A real firetrap.

But you got fed at the Cino. We passed the basket. Any time we got an actress who said, "Oh, I don't pass the basket," it was, "Fuck you, out the door!" If you can't pass the basket, you're not an actor. Those who didn't, didn't do another show. Near the end, Joe had to lock his fridge. When the Warhol bunch came in.

The Cino was not into discipline. Flashes of brilliance, but not necessarily constancy. No structure. It was good because we were experimenting in the sixties. It was frantic and sick. A catharsis. Any catharsis is frightening, really. Fun and heavenly - and also complete horror at the same time.

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Johnny Dodd battled Milligan over lighting - and everything else. "Andy would find a place where you were vulnerable, or find a way that you would argue with him. 'It's blue,' you say. 'No, it's white,' he said. 'No, blue,' you say. And then he would say, 'Really? The reason you said it's blue is you're probably color-blind.' Whatever he had to do to get you to fly off the handle.

"We had an awful fight one day. I threw a coffee cup at him. Andy smiled at me. He laughed, he thought it was cute - it was just what he wanted. It blew my head. We had terrible fights during *Deathwatch* and Cino said, 'Don't pick up on it. Andy doesn't care what color it is, he's just trying to make you crazy.' "

Much of Milligan's vitriol was aimed at the opposite sex. "I found that was a good way to get him going - bring a woman over to the table," said Dodd. "Andy would just *attack* some woman who came in with fingernails all done up. He would say, 'Were you out *whoring* tonight? Because you look like a whore. Oh, *excuse* me, I don't mean a real whore. I mean a *cheap whore*.' I remember saying to him, 'Some women are quite nice - you can even fuck them in the ass, Andy.' He went nuts over that."

"I wouldn't say Andy was happy," said Ellen Maris. "His childhood – he couldn't get away from all that. All women had something he saw in them that reminded him of his mother. He hated women." [*Women weren't Milligan's only target. "Andy didn't like homosexuals - he hated them," said Dodd. "It was a toss-up between them and women - which was worse. You would think that he would ally himself - gays would at least accept him - but no. No way."*]

This attitude manifested itself supremely in his plays. "Milligan always showed women in the most *awful* light," said Bob Dahdah. "Bitchy, violent, demanding, demoniacal, aggressive, you name it. Ellen Maris in *Two Executioners*, the monster women in *The Maids*."

And yet Milligan could extract incredible performances out of his leading ladies. It was almost cliché - the cruel director and his masochistic subjects (like Fassbinder, Milligan would even *marry* one of his leading ladies). Andy knew how to "get inside a woman and destroy her," recalled Joe Davies. "And she was gonna show that motherfucking SOB. 'I *can* do it.'" "Milligan loved to bring people to their breaking point," said Dodd. "And it's funny, because in the later sixties that became OK for avant garde directors to do, but still - not many of them got as good at it as Milligan was."

Decades later, most of the actresses I spoke to had yet to forget their experiences with Milligan and even spoke of him with a peculiar fondness. Many still had the outlandish costumes he'd made for them so many years before. "Andy was mean as the devil, but he got results," said Ellen Maris. "He could cut you like a knife. He could hit you where you live. He would push you right to the limit. Right to the very limit."

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SEE, WOMEN HAVE GOTTA BE PUSHED TO THE WALL. Men are easy to guide as actors. A woman has her own set of ideas. The only way to get a woman to be a fine actress is to get her into tears. You actually have to crush her, slap her around mentally so that she opens up. Once you get her to tears, she's a fine actress. Women are *hard as nails*. You gotta slap 'em in order to survive. You have to know when they're chiseling away at your masculinity. American females are the worst in the world - American men are masochistic because of the women. They love to cut your balls off every chance they get. That's why I'm so nasty to them.

I think I'm one of the few men who understand women. I studied that in my dress shop. A month before the wedding it's, "A cigarette please, darling?" A week before "Uh, Joe - cigarette?" Three months after the marriage it's, "Hey, stupid - a cigarette."

Women can't stand routine. Things go too smoothly for them, they have to rock the boat. To be reassured that they're needed and wanted and loved again. They have a cycle - some have a three-hour cycle, some have a three-day cycle. Some are on a three-*month* cycle, which is wonderful. Mental cruelty - that's the only thing they understand in a man. Women can't stand a sensitive man. If you are sensitive to a woman, you're looking for trouble. She'll misinterpret it as *weak*. The only women I saw in my dress shops who loved their men dearly were the ones who were with bastards. Brutal men.

Chauvinism, it's a fact. There's a male-female relationship - I preach it in practically all my scripts. Women must be told what to do and what

not to do. What to wear and what not to wear - "No, I don't like it. Take it off." And women after menopause if they don't have a strong male around them, they have to be committed. They go crazy.

I can usually tell a woman painter - something soft about them, pastels. If I see a film, I can tell if a woman did it. *You can tell the difference*. They do things that *aren't profound*. The brain of the man weighs more than the woman.

Women are basically monsters. Anger, jealousy, hate ... there's no watering down any of it. All your great plays are structured on nobility in a man and treachery in a woman. A man basically has moral sense, a woman does not. She's Scarlett O'Hara. Hell hath no fury. She is only interested in revenge. She'll kill today and worry about it tomorrow. She has no morality, woman. Men still have that gentleman's handshake.

4

CUKAYA

JOE DAVIES LAUGHED. "There was a little joke about Andy Milligan - 'So and so spent the night at Andy's. Well, we know Little Junior's been well *spanked* and he knows how to behave now.' " "In sex play, Andy would take cigarettes and burn people," whispered Taka Nakano. Word got out quickly wherever Milligan went: Andy was a sadist.

Milligan's boots alone left an indelible impression on the Cino crowd. In 1960, you just didn't wear them if you weren't a cowboy - and Andy was a dressmaking ex-puppeteer. "Andy was kind of freaky, very unusual sexual appetite," recalled Angelo Levullo. "He was always looking around, sex always on his mind."

What kind of sex? "It was not romantic, not about loving and kissing - that was for silly people," said Johnny Dodd. "Andy had no interest in *real* sex. He was serious, and it scared me a little. I could see in my head where you could play games - 'Let's pretend I'm the postman,' or whatever - but I thought there should be real sex in there. I got the impression Andy could have a good time without taking off his pants." [*Angelo Levullo and Johnny Dodd insisted Andy wore leather at the Cino, and they both had the same sort of vivid recollections of Milligan's garb. "He was one of the first people blatant about S&M costumes - leather pants with no ass, just chaps and studs," insisted Dodd. Milligan went ballistic when I asked him about this. "Bullshit, that's all bullshit. People tarnish time terribly. ... I've never worn leather in my life. I'm not an extrovert." Having known Andy, I must admit I find it extremely difficult to picture him decked out in such obvious costumery.*]

Joe Davies was one of the few Cino denizens with firsthand knowledge of Milligan having a good time with and without pants. "We knew each other on a professional level - then we knew each other on a very decadent, coarse level." [*Davies waxed eloquent on the particulars of Milligan's manhood - size, shape, color. "Andy has a magnificent instrument, I mean beautiful. ... He was proud - he used to tease people. They'd beg him for it.*

And the more they'd beg, they never got. The only ones who got it were the ones indifferent."

Andy was extremely pleased to hear these remarks. In our years of endless interviews, it was the only compliment to get his attention.] A self-described satyr, Davies was an expert on New York's sexual underbelly. "I was a humanitarian sadist. Word got out if you wanted a good time, a safe time, go see Joe." Davies often bumped into Milligan on the prowl in subway toilets and sex theaters. Occasionally they'd plot "little numbers" together, until one particular scene went badly awry. Davies said it was "the last time we ever did anything of that nature. I felt I couldn't trust him."

Davies was the janitor for many off-Broadway venues and had keys to the Actor's Playhouse. One night Milligan showed up after hours with another well-known sadist, Rocky, and a young submissive male. Davies reported that Andy's type sported "an adolescent look ... the whole illusion of baby and daddy."

The show running at the Playhouse was *Success*, and the production sported a doorway on the set. Milligan's plaything wanted to be tied spread eagle to it. Out came masks, whips, and chains. They strung the kid up, beat him with a belt, even spray-painted him. "I kept going back and forth to make sure nobody was in the theater," said Davies, unnerved by the violence. Things reached a climax when some tire chains entered the picture. "That's when the kid said, 'OK, enough! I've had *enough*.'" Andy and Rocky kept at it. "That's when the kid screamed." They worked on the slave like a couple of rabid coyotes fighting over a fresh piece of meat. Davies intervened.

"One of them slapped me - which *wasn't* part of the game. That's when I said, 'That's it.' Andy reached back and gave the kid a big whack. I choked Andy, told the kid to get the fuck out. The kid went back in and they said, 'Oh, you want *more*?' They whacked him, kicked him in the stomach. ... I told the kid to get dressed and leave. It was a heavy scene. Real, real heavy.

"I got the kid together, got him upstairs. Rocky and Andy both laughed. The kid waited at the top of the stairs and I said, *'Go on! Leave!'* He said, 'I want to say good-bye to you gentlemen.' He had on a lovely leather jacket with

epaulets - brand-new. Andy ripped off the epaulets and kicked the kid out. I said, 'Andy, why did you do that?' He laughed and said, 'It's part of the game.'"

For a final touch, Milligan knocked the boy's eyeglasses to the ground and crushed them under his boot. Davies grew troubled recalling the moment. "Andy was high ... excited eyes. I'm sure he had an orgasm when he stepped on the glasses." [*When ruminating on Milligan's sex life, a quote from* City of Night *author John Rechy always sprang to mind. He told interviewer Bruce Benderson that gay S&M was "the most honest form of self-oppression. In it the only S is a heterosexual and the only M is a homosexual. The dynamics of the playacting are, 'I will now play straight and you will be the queer, and I will punish you for having desire.'"*]

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And thus Andy Milligan was, as Johnny Dodd put it, "the Cino's connection to leather." One could say Milligan stoked some sort of unstoppable S&M sex train at the Cino, which picked up steam when a creature named Jonathan Torrey skulked in. "I always remember a pair of motorcycle boots Andy had with Jon Torrey's teeth marks in them," said Dodd. "*They* should have been in the Lincoln Center exhibit of Cino memorabilia." Torrey's tempestuous relationship with Joe Cino would play a major role in the theater's downfall. "Torrey was the devil who came into paradise," said Matt Baylor. "That's when the perversions started."

"Torrey was dark," said actress Janet Hessler. "You just knew there was real darkness in his life." A greasy, gangly Ichabod Crane character given to denim jackets and hoots to the knees, the six-foot-six Torrey was "thin, pasty-faced - not anybody you'd think of as cute or handsome," said Dodd. "A big, gawky guy who never changed his dungarees." "There was a maleness," added Baylor. "There was a violence. He'd take his garrison belt off, smack it on the table, and everyone would jump."

Torrey came from a fairly wealthy Jewish family that had adopted him. His parents were much older and "could indulge him - fine school, fine clothes, vacations," said Angelo Levullo. "He didn't have to worry about making a

living." Intellectual pursuits seem to have mattered little to Torrey, who had an amazing aptitude for all things electrical and was always surreptitiously wiring the Cino to outside light poles or subway stops. "I mentioned I'd like to have a phone in the living room. He went right out, pulled a pay phone out, and connected it right there.

"Torrey was very rebellious and angry at the society he grew up in. He wanted to do everything to fly in their face. The way he looked, his morals, his standards. He was a racketeer who had been educated at Dartmouth. He didn't have much emotional discipline. For all his adoptive parents did for him, he felt more at home with Joe and troubled people and drug addicts."

"The most cynical person I had ever met," Robert Patrick insisted. "He often wore a Hitler youth outfit, always had big dark rings under his eyes, which to me suggested worldly despair. It may have just been drugs for all I know. Johnny had not come to the Cino to be repressed."

Upon arriving at the Caffe Cino, Torrey started doing lights and electrical work and ran smack-dab into Andy Milligan (he illuminated what were most likely Milligan's first Cino productions in January 1961). "Torrey was not quite crystallized as Joe Cino's lover yet and had sort of a mini weekend with Andy," said Johnny Dodd. "Torrey liked him. I was horrified. I hadn't seen or heard of S&M yet. He had little marks all over his body. All kinds of ... it was frightening. It defined Torrey sexually. He went from blue jeans to leather."

The relationship that developed between Joe Cino and Torrey was a twisted one, exacerbated by copious amounts of speed and whatever other contraband the duo could shovel into their system. And it was sadistic. "Torrey was mean to Joe," said Michael Smith. "I guess that was part of the relationship. Whatever was going on was hidden, nothing was ever explained."

"Torrey was intensely jealous of Joe Cino with anybody, and liked to make Joe Cino jealous by being with people," said Kenny Burgess. "It got so bad they would go to parties separately."

The pair were forever taunting each other. "Torrey would be very upset with Joe's relationships with other people, and he would have this horrible habit of going to 42nd Street and picking up strangers," said actress Liz Shanklin. "I think he was jealous of Cino's love for people," said Helen Hamft. "Torrey was a follower, Cino a leader."

"He and Cino would have these five-day sex-and-drug encounters," said Dodd, and, all these decades later, I got the picture. Dodd was still miffed that Torrey had caught Joe's wandering eye, along with outdoing him in the devil-boy department. "Their relationship would get so crazy. Torrey would do these destructive things, like wreck the joint. And he would be exiled. Then he'd always come back. Each time was more nightmarish and involved more people. 'Watch how I can spoil it' was his thing. Y'know how you have to put up with the boss's drunk wife? Torrey made it impossible for you to like him. He was only doing this sick thing with Joe, he didn't care about the plays. Torrey wanted to be drinking whiskey and taking pills and driving Joe crazy with whips and things ... but that's what Joe appreciated. People going as far as you have to go. That's what he called art."

But Jon Torrey was one dark artwork Joe Cino would not survive. "There was something imbalanced in Jon," said Angelo Levello. "He was gonna screw everyone every chance he got."

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Andy Milligan kept on the move, expanding into venues outside the Cino. On October 18, 1961, Andy helped Ellen Stewart open Cafe La Mama Theater at 321 East 9th by reprising his Cino production of *Before Breakfast*. Stewart, a black dressmaker, was "very competitive," said Bob Heide, who had noticed her scrutinizing the Cino. "She studied it. She recognized something she could use and capitalize on." Stewart opened the basement theatre with a fifty-dollar unemployment check. Milligan would direct the first five shows at La Mama, all of them Cino imports.

"Andy was *the* La Mama director - without him we probably wouldn't have gotten started," said playwright Paul Foster. "He came around and looked at

the stage and said, 'Oh, my God, there's nothing here. Where's the light board?' And we pointed to the wall switch, which was either on or off. Andy asked, 'Do you have any gels?' I didn't know what a gel was and neither did Ellen. I looked at her and said, 'Ellen, do you have any gels?' She said, 'I don't know, Sugar, let me look in my purse.' Andy knew instantly we didn't know what we were doing and said, 'Don't get in my way while I fix this place into a theater.'"

Before Breakfast played to an empty house, but by the time he brought in *One Arm* they were "hanging from the rafters," or so Andy claimed. Milligan would not be around, though, to enjoy La Mama's success. He walked out after a tiff with Stewart over some missing fabric. A woman with power was one thing Andy couldn't stand, so onto the list of enemies she went. He was still ranting about her decades later.

La Mama would soon eclipse the Cino. "Joe could never take it to where La Mama took it," said Bob Heide. "There was a self-sabotage aspect to it." Joe Cino had none of Ellen Stewart's moxie for self-promotion. He was ambivalent about giving interviews or courting publicity. "Critics were thrown out," said Johnny Dodd. "One of them I actually had to carry out - she was a crippled critic for *Show Business*. It was, 'Don't take notes, do it *with* us.' Cino would say, 'There is no history. Only today and maybe tomorrow.'"

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Milligan next attempted to open his own venue, entering into a disastrous venture called the Showboat Theater, a former leather bar on Second Avenue near 14th Street that Milligan converted with the involvement of Paul Foster, Phoebe Mooney [*Mooney had encountered that nefarious Milligan magic as a Sullivan Street Player, performing Ophelia's death scene opposite Neil Flanagan. "Neil was holding my shoulders down. It was too literal. Andy kept saying, 'Fight, fight!' I practically got strangled."*] - who'd directed the first play at the Cino, *Alice in Wonderland* - and Gerry Jacuzzo, a thin, bald, intense New Orleans born actor who had appeared in Mooney's play. Jacuzzo became Milligan's live-in companion for the next half-dozen years. Nothing else positive came out of the venture.

Milligan's one-man-band production style suited a small space like the Cino, but in larger projects he had to acquiesce to the interests of others, and it drove him crazy. "Andy had such a hard time delegating authority," said Jacuzzo. "He was a very controlling person." Milligan was so over worked renovating the unheated, unlit Showboat that he overlooked the play. Mooney watched rehearsals and felt Milligan was concerned only that the performers spew forth their lines at as frantic a pace as possible. One scene had the actors "saying all their lines behind this weird tree ... it was funny, it was all wrong. I'd never seen him do anything like that. All of a sudden his direction was just terrible, in my opinion. He just completely destroyed the whole thing. He didn't even see it."

The Showboat opened in April 1963 with *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, an 1893 Shaw provocation concerning the politics of prostitution. Mrs. Warren is unapologetic when her well-heeled daughter Vivie, a math genius, discovers her secret - that she worked in a brothel to fund her daughter's education. The play "infuriates because it goes to the bottom of our evils; because it places the accusing finger upon the sorest and most damnable spot in our social fabric - sex as woman's only commodity in the competitive market of life," wrote Emma Goldman. A 1905 production at New York City's Garrick Theatre was shut down by the police. "Oddly enough, it may be George Bernard Shaw who pioneered the notion of 'adult entertainment' in Times Square," wrote Laurence Senelick in his essay "Private Parts, Public Places."

Milligan's production was also shut down, but for different reasons. Starring Abe Vigoda, later of TV's *Barney Miller*, the show was savaged by critics. "A bore," said the *Times*. "Ineptitude," declared the *Morning Telegraph*. [*Not unlike Fassbinder and his obsession with filming Fontane's 1895 woman-gone-wrong novel* Effi Briest*, Milligan returned to* Mrs. Warren's Profession *many times over the years, even converting it into a musical –* Vivie - *at one point. Both Fassbinder and Milligan did productions of Strindberg's* Miss Julie*, an 1888 sadomasochistic shocker concerning an aristocratic woman who falls for her lower-class servant.*]

The second production - five months later due to a lack of funds - was a Milligan adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, intended as a comeback

vehicle for faded Hollywood hopeful Jay Robinson, most famous for his over-the-top performance as Caligula in the 1953 picture *The Robe*. Robinson, his career killed by a drug bust in'58, was by now so destitute that Milligan let him keep the wool suit he wore onstage. But *Dorian Gray* was another flop. "Blatantly boring," said the *Village Voice*, which poked fun at Milligan's attempt at gothic atmosphere. [*Milligan returned to* Dorian Gray *years later, reworking it into his favorite theme: woman as destroyer. Budgeted at $50,000,* The Picture of Doreen Gray *was the story of a "beautiful light skinned black girl" who "sells her soul for eternal youth." Gaining fame as a singer, we see Doreen's "gradual decline and degradation ... murders, suicides, drugs, etc.... everything and everyone that Doreen touches pays dearly." Although never realized, the treatment betrays the Milligan touch: "The film should be shot in deep and very lush colors in the beginning, with a great deal of smoke and haze ... as we progress, and everyone grows old around Doreen, the colors should become pale and sterile: a lot of white and beige ... tans. Doreen should be always be dressed in shades of white. Always ..." Milligan also hinted at the paranormal. Every time Doreen is seen, some inanimate object - "a flower, a book, an ashtray" should move "ever so slightly."*]

These were Milligan's first bad reviews, and they were vicious. Coming off his string of successes at the Cino, it was cold water in the face. Milligan struggled to keep the theater afloat. "He kept bringing all these people in just to get money," said Phoebe Mooney. "The whole thing was a mess. Andy was totally self-destructive." Paul Foster lost $2,000 when the theater folded.

The affair wound up in court. Mooney shuddered at the memory of clashes with Andy. "He came after me like he was going to kill me." Her lawyer warily ventured into the Showboat to find the theater trashed. "Andy had taken a hatchet or something and chopped up all the seats. I was sure that he would kill somebody.... I'm surprised that he hasn't, intentionally or unintentionally."

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Meanwhile, the Cino continued to explode. New talent came in, bringing more original plays. Tom O'Horgan, William Hoffman, Lanford Wilson, John Guare, Tom Eyen, Marshall Mason, Bob Heide's *The Bed. Dames at Sea* introduced Bernadette Peters to the world and, said Dodd, brought in "the tourist element - you never knew if you were talking to a real person or somebody who was trying to get their resume together." In 1965, both the Cino and La Mama received Obie awards from the *Village Voice* for outstanding achievement in off-Broadway theater. But there was a downside to success. "It was a contributing factor to Cino's madness," said Dodd. "It started to corrupt everybody."

"I think the Cino at its best was before the theater took over, the playwrights took over," said *Voice* critic Michael Smith. "Before that it had a much wilder energy - there wasn't that emphasis on playwrights. Joe had a lot of friends from all kinds of worlds - strippers, prostitutes, the Greek crowd - that were driven out by the people who were doing plays. I was sort of a part of that, because I would write it up and review it as a serious place - 'Here's the new theater being born.' But the more that got reinforced, the less room there was for anything else to happen."

Certain chemicals were also having an impact. "Drugs were part of the Cino," Kenny Burgess admitted. "I'd been taking benzedrine and dexedrine for years; Joe Cino and I went to same doctor." The joke was if you wanted to stay out all night, ask for one of Joe's hot chocolates. "I served many a doped cup," boasted Dodd.

In the early years, "They were a little discreet in the Cino, always secret in the bathroom," said Matt Baylor. "Nothin' happened in front of the tourists." But by the mid-sixties, drugs were omnipresent, and for Cino, obsessed with his increasing weight (La Porkesa, he called himself in Cinaka), the amphetamine abuse was taking its toll. "I don't know if you've ever been strung out on speed, but try like ten years of it," said Dodd. "Ten years of accelerating. More, more, more." And new drugs had arrived: LSD, heroin.

People began to die on Cornelia Street. Freddie Herko thought he could fly. A twenty-nine-year-old dancer, Herko was part of the Warhol crowd, appearing onscreen with pal Johnny Dodd in *Kiss*. On October 27, 1964,

Dodd found him wandering the streets, apparently strung out on speed, and took him back to his Cornelia Street apartment. Herko took a bubble bath, then started dancing naked to Mozart on Dodd's turntable. He spun around the room, inching closer and closer to an open window until he threw himself right out.

"I was sitting there and Freddie said, 'I'm flying! I'm flying!' And y'know - he did," recalled Joe Davies. "For a moment, I looked out the window and there he was - flying." But Herko crash-landed. Actress Liz Shanklin was walking down the street on her way to the Cino. "I turned the corner and saw this person's body naked in the street. With a crack in his skull and a red stream of blood."

Then there was Paul, one of Frank Thompson's young playthings, who overdosed on heroin alone one night in the gallery. Thompson discovered him upon opening the next day in preparation for a visit from millionaire art patron Walter Chrysler. "Paul fell over on a very big occasion," drawled the ghoulish Thompson.

"People said, 'Oooh, he's dead, don't touch him.' I said, 'That's our *Paul*.' I slapped him, tried to bring him out of it, but it was rigor mortis. I'm the only one who still loved him after he was dead.... We straightened him out and I shut the door again." Thompson kept the body hidden while Chrysler perused paintings. (Amazingly, Paul's parents were aware he was living in Thompson's den of sin. Supposedly Frank was making sure the kid stayed off drugs. "If that was taking care of him, God help us," said actor Martin Reymert.)

"Paul - he was a minitragedy," said Johnny Dodd. "It was like a war. You got used to people saying, 'Oh, by the way ...' Why did everybody die? Oh, who could *handle* this? It got to a level of intensity and kept going up even more. I knew this was gonna crash. Then we just sort of settled into this plateau and went for it."

In retrospect, some see the Cino's ego-peeling therapy-theater as psychobabble, a sort of hedonistic insanity. "I think we all had a grand sense of ourselves, exacerbated by drugs," said actress Lucy Silvay Peluso. "You

would have these extraordinarily intense meetings with someone and nowhere to go from there. I think we were very defensive and very unobtainable behind this intensity. How do you build a relationship?"

It became an endurance test. "Others were trying to stave off their self-destruction by destroying people ahead of them," said Robert Patrick. "Pushing people into the pit, trying to guess what was in it before they fell in themselves."

"It freaked a whole lot of people out as it went along," said Dodd. "It got harder. There was a kind of brutality that would go down. Cino would say to somebody, 'I read your play and it's a pile of shit! Go home and write *the truth*.' I mean, just really cutting them to the core."

Cino theater reflected the chaos. Plays were suddenly being replaced by comic books. Things just got farther and farther out. In March 1966, *The Death of the Tintagiles*, a work by Maurice Maeterlinck, "took itself just a little too seriously," recalled Dodd. "Harry Koutoukas started laughing at the serious parts, like when the princess is gonna be burned at the stake. And the audience started laughing and the actors started talking back - this is over many performances. Little by little they laughed it right off the stage."

At least we had a bad show, now we have none, Cino complained to Harry. Koutoukas then proceeded to put on a play based on a comic he'd found lying around. "That was the end of doing it straight, of doing 'a good play' or something like that. That was the end of trying to please *anybody*," said Dodd. "The real playwrights knew they had to get out of there – haha - or they were gonna be writing these comic book things. And only the real far-out playwrights were left then - like Koutoukas. That was the golden age of the Cino."

"A full-throttle rocket into space," is how Hal Borske described the work of H. M. Koutoukas. A character among characters, the velvet-caped Koutoukas spoke his own lingo and wrote druggy, dreamy scenarios full of mirror balls, toy pianos, and pearl-covered lobsters. "Insane fantasies which were beyond perverted - they were *perverse*," said Robert Patrick. "I think

some of the older people were appalled by the freedom that blossomed. It might have startled Andy Milligan and Neil Flanagan. They might have felt like they were the older generation. They watched people like me, Harry Koutoukas, Johnny Dodd, like we were strange little fairies."

But many of the old guard saw Jonathan Torrey and Johnny Dodd less as little fairies and more as evil, amoral ringleaders of the Cino's later years, each manipulating Joe Cino to their own ends. Bob Heide recalled a friend watching "Torrey and Dodd yelling at each other, romping up the stairs in a loud, vexacious manner." "Those men are like a pack of *wild dogs*," muttered the friend.

Some of the Cino's original crowd began dropping out. "There came a time when the interior of the Cino was so changed a few of us wouldn't go in," said Esther Travers. "There was silver paper on the wall and colored gauze. It was strange. What is the word - *kinky*?"

"After a while there was a group of people - gays who weren't very nice to the regulars - we'd go there and they'd make us feel unwelcome," said Taka Nakano. "A whole group of us stopped going altogether. The whole atmosphere was gay. One-hundred percent gay."

Andy Milligan despised this phase of the Cino. He had no use for drug crazed hedonism. Despite his wild reputation as a sadist, he was anti everything else. As Matt Baylor said, "Milligan wasn't fun to be with. You could barely get a glass of beer. I'd go out drinkin' and whoopin' it up - 'Oh, you've been out drinkin', haven't you, Matt?' I don't know what Andy was in the past - maybe one of those Puritans up in New England, burning witches."

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I'M AN OLD DISCIPLINARIAN. People respected me because I put on a good production. Anybody who didn't do the whole drug-and-drink devil-may-care thing at the Cino was sort of ostracized. The third show at the Cino, they'd all be pie-eyed at Royal Roost, Mona's place. If they drank after just one of my shows they wouldn't be in another. I just don't like alcohol.

I've never taken drugs in my life - maybe Nyquil. I get sick from it. Allergic. All of Johnny Dodd's friends who jumped off the roof ... LSD and all that. Johnny Dodd got off on causing trouble. He manipulated people - he manipulated Joe all the time. Whenever he manipulated, he had this Mona Lisa smile - that angelic, cherubic smile of destruction.

Johnny Dodd and I did not get along. *One Arm* was one of the last shows I did at the Cino. A sick little play. I wanted amber light down into the cell; Johnny wouldn't do it. We were having a terrible time. And Joe came in and said, "You do what Andy wants," and Johnny spit in my face and I decked him. I never did any more shows after that. He poisoned Joe against me. Joe never said anything, I just never brought in any projects. Joe and I were never close after that.

Joe didn't particularly like me - he liked me for my talent. The only thing that would get me a show with Joe was the fact that he knew I would bring 'em in in droves. It was always done professionally. It wasn't sloppy.

Johnny was Joe's favorite. He's the one who pushed drugs on everybody - sweetly. We had a gorgeous kid who used to work for Frank Thompson, used to do bit parts in our shows. He would take LSD and when he hit twenty he would sit in Washington Square park blubbering, a vegetable. Sitting there, everything running from his eyes and nose, just blubbering in the park. That was Frank Thompson. Frank is a very satanic person inside. He comes on sweet. Always got a smile. He smiles as he talks about death. He's totally evil. He's a vampire, a Venus's-flytrap. A meat eater, hee hee.

There were thirteen deaths and suicides within three years in the one block of Cornelia Street. The sickest block in the world. Insidious, alcohol and drugs. I think anybody who peddles 'em should be shot. Literally. Killed. That includes your wine makers, cigarette makers. They're death peddlers.

The Warhol bunch was the nastiest. When they came into the Cino they destroyed it. They were all terrible actors. Undisciplined. Never on

time, just sloppy. Candy Darling had a few good qualities, but they were really ugly people. Self-centered, egotistical poisonalities. Freak show time. Freaks bring drugs. The Warhol people ruined Cino.

I served a summons on Warhol once. This gal and guy who were on my crew on *Naked Temptress* were suing him. And they couldn't get to him. We knew he hung out at the Electric Circus. They said, "He doesn't know who you are - will you serve this summons on him?" And he's walking down with his entourage and I said, "Andy Warhol?" And he said, "Yes?" I said, "Here. For you." I enjoyed that.

It was all vodka in the beginning of the Cino. They'd drink till dawn and pass out until show time. Joe and Jon used to get on vodka, dance naked, and smash up the place. Every two weeks or so we'd have to have a benefit. Wild period. Torrey was a dirty man; he never bathed. All the Cino bunch were dirty. I got along very well with Torrey.

Joe was a strange person to really get to know. I never knew him that well. He'd be friends and help you if you needed food, whatever, put a show on - but there was always a chalk line between Joe and everybody else. He was a loner. Joe was distant to everybody but Torrey.

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"Torrey was the turning point," maintained Matt Baylor. "We no longer heard Kate Smith sing - it was Lotte Lenya, Kurt Weill, Bazouki music. Weird music, very arch, very stark and stern. It turned heavier. Louder music, stronger wine."

The ante upped by insane amounts of amphetamines and booze, the coupling of Joe Cino and Jonathan Torrey festered inside the walls of the Caffe like some unholy DNA experiment lurking in a petri dish. Torrey was a Frankenstein. "When he had problems with Joe, he acted out viciously," said Angelo Levullo. "He tried to destroy the Cino several times." Torrey would enter in a rage and demolish whatever paintings were on display by taking a whip to them or obliterating them with black ink. "Joe couldn't control Torrey once he went off. He just stood there helplessly and watched him do it." "Once Torrey destroyed all these Tiffany lamp shades, about

thirty of them, that Frank Thompson had lent the Cino," said Dodd. "I liked that. It was anarchy. A true movie."

On Ash Wednesday, March 5, 1965, the Cino went up in flames. Jean-Claude Van Itallie's *War* was the production. Though chalked up publicly to a gas leak, everybody knew the blaze was the handiwork of Jonathan Torrey. Earlier that night a drunken Torrey had called Kenny Burgess. "He said he set the place on fire blah, blah, blah. So we went there and he had some young dumb trick - there was no fire. Torrey was just delighted we walked in there." Burgess laughed it off and returned home, but the next morning the Caffe Cino was a heap of ashes.

"Torrey went *cukaya*," said Angelo Levullo. "Joe was gonna close it. He was crying on the phone. He said, 'You don't understand! Torrey destroyed everything!' Paintings, machines ... he just went mad." Burgess arrived to discover an entire installation of his art destroyed. He went to pick up a drawing and "it just crumbled in my hands." Also found in the rubble, according to Joe Davies, was a huge wax dildo that had improbably survived the blaze. "Torrey said Andy Milligan had made it. Andy had used it on him."

Benefits were held at La Mama and other venues to raise money to reopen the Cino. "That was a grand moment - made everybody rally," said Dodd. "Torrey arrived with a lawyer and said all the lighting and wiring had been his and he wanted *money* for it! In the middle of everybody raising nickels and dimes to get it together. Cino said it was his shit, we had to do it."

Torrey was unrelenting. Shirley Stoller remembered, "Torrey did a bizarre thing - he went to an attorney and sued Joe for back salary. He was awarded 51 percent of the place. I remember walking in saying, 'Oh, is this now going to be called Caffe Torrey?'"

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Due to his fights with Dodd and his outrage over all the drugging, Andy Milligan was conspicuously absent for the Cino's tortured demise, but it's a tale that demands an ending.

The scene inside the Caffe became more and more unglued. "As Joe required more drugs, his tolerance of the shady people grew," said Angelo Levullo. "Cino's was beginning to be a struggle. New personalities came in, wanting to get in on it. Cino couldn't cope. He was losing his grip. Losing control."

"There were people from the underworld," claimed Dodd. "Cino had a weakness for a certain type of butch guy - he preferred them just out of prison. Mother was one of those. He would patiently sit through the Lance Wilson plays, and if you weren't careful he'd slip things in your coffee cup." "Mother was a hillbilly - straight denims, leather vest, big floppy hat," said Matt Baylor. "Rural looking - really from another century. A skinny, greasy speed freak. Wound up under the tracks of a West 4th Street subway train one night - somebody pushed him. Torrey knew all these unsavory types." Baylor recalled Torrey and Mother plotting to avenge a soured drug deal. "He handed Torrey his pocketknife and said, 'Give him this and say it's from Mother.' That kind of bullshit junior gangster was right up Jonathan Torrey's alley," said Baylor. "What, were we in an old western?"

And then came the "Warhol People". Andy Warhol's notorious Factory scene was in full swing over at 231 East 47th Street, and naturally a few of its habitues found their way to the Cino. "Toward the end the Cino became a drug den, unfortunately," said Paul Foster. "When the Warhol crowd descended, I just instinctively avoided them. They weren't really artists. Even I could see they were drugged. There wasn't anybody there; you were talking to a pill."

"They were very bright people, and they were devoted to cruelty," said actor Walter Burns. The brutal, black-haired speed god known as Pope Ondine, a.k.a. Bob Olivio, was a particular challenge - a funny, vicious, human wrecking ball. To watch Ondine in action was to experience sadism of a different kind, and if he turned on you with his tongue, you'd better have your will in order. His appetite for chemical consumption was limitless. "You'd get wiped out by being with him," said Burns. "You realized he was killing himself, and it was horrifying to watch." This was a bunch capable of ingesting "tremendous amounts of speed. Tremendous. They were like bulls - they could just keep on taking it."

Then there was Orion, who some claimed was a witch. "Orion was a muse, a dark muse," said Dodd. "A Sephardic Jew - very dark hair, white skin, big eyes, just gorgeous. She was the master of her trade and she adored crazy artistic types. Orion would show up with her little suitcases and that's how the mysteries got written. She would give everybody ... something."

The Warhol People - namely Ondine - would be blamed for facilitating not only the end of the Cino, but Joe Cino's life as well. "Ondine was a cunt," said Charles Loubier. "A druggie."

When I reached a battered, stuttering Ondine shortly before his death in 1989, he snorted over the criticisms. "The 'Warhol People'! There were no 'Warhol People' except me! I knew Joe Cino from Fire Island in the fifties when he was a *houseboy* and we called him *Ginger*.

"Sure, I gave Joe drugs. I gave *everyone* drugs, even my mother. I slipped LSD in her coffee; she went on *some* trip. I drugged everybody – I *liked* drugs. I just ha-ha-handed 'em out. If I were able to take drugs now I'd hand 'em out, too.

"Nobody in the mid-sixties could ever accuse anybody of taking drugs. *Everybody* took drugs. Every single fucking human being. I went to the Cino to *purchase* my peyote, and *believe it or not* I was introduced to hallucinogens at the Caffe Cino.

"The 'Warhol People' were an infusion of life blood at a point when the Caffe Cino needed it. I brought in an audience that was pretty spectacular. It wasn't just created to be pocket theater for a bunch of old faggots."

Johnny Dodd also railed against the "Warhol People" conspiracies. "Bullshit, complete bullshit ... it's easy - for the movie version. Cino *adored* Ondine as a fellow upper-fanatic madman. Talk about willing victims! Some people were so hurt by this thing ending, Cino dying, they needed a culprit."

But even Dodd concurred that drug use intensified upon the arrival of the Warhol set. Ondine and company brought in "bushel baskets full of pure methedrine. It was like you had to sweep it out of the way - way beyond

what people could use." During the nightmarish month-long December 1966 run of *A Christmas Carol*, starring Ondine and filmed by Warhol, the Cino turned into a shooting gallery. "Joe asked me to be in a show one of the Warhol people did," said Robert Patrick. "They were all drugged out of their minds. The dressing room was a mass of cookers and needles ... it was just drugs day and night."

"There were a couple of years where the shows were all LSD," said Dodd. "High-class crazies coming for the last show so they would be there after it closed. High-class drug people - coming in with the finest acid. Pure, really pure, like no one ever gets it. One drop was enough to take the whole room out. It was one big trip. Every night was another chapter.

"People thought of the Cino as a heavy-duty leather place - or somewhere where you could get something in your coffee and the next thing you knew you were being gangbanged by five or six guys. It happened many times - happened to some real famous people, too. They thought they'd come around and be sort of cute and flirty. Oh, no.

"There were after-hours things at the Cino that were more monumental than any cultural thing - little theater pieces with hustlers. Very heavy. We'd all go to 42nd Street to the movies. Cino would pick people up there and bring them back; sometimes they'd hang around a couple of days. There was one guy who stayed for about three days and all he did was sit onstage. I remember focusing a little spotlight as people sucked his twenty-inch dick."

Dodd recalled one young actor in particular who played a much more intense starring role after the show had ended and the Cino's doors were locked. "He was this beautiful guy. Tall, blond, and just gorgeous. Everybody was desperate for him. Cino and somebody else doped him up one night although he wanted it. 'Yeah, give me one of those hot chocolates, Joe.' Crystal meth, whatever else.

"He went onstage, they got all his clothes off and did this wonderful little drama and I lit it. It got into a foot fetish for a couple of hours, and I remember focusing all these little lights down on this guy's feet, everybody high. Any time it would become any sort of little theater thing he'd get

excited. Star of the show, lights focused on him, oh, they were treating him like some prince. It wasn't sex, it wasn't theater, I don't know what it was, but it went on until eleven o'clock the next morning."

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A fuse had been lit from the Cino's beginning. Now it was time for the explosions to start. The first major detonation was Joe's beau. Jonathan Torrey, sent back home for some unnamed offense, or maybe to dry out from amphetamines, died in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, on January 5, 1967. He had been electrocuted fiddling with some wiring. Some claim it was intentional. "Torrey intuitively understood electricity, which makes it all the more strange," said Paul Foster.

The news of Torrey's death devastated Joe Cino. "I was there when the phone call came in," said Johnny Dodd. "Five minutes from putting a show on."

"Cino was beside himself," said Charles Loubier, who used to play a crazy game with Joe called Funerale, where they'd both pretend to be grieving over a deceased loved one. "After Torrey he said, 'Remember Funerale?' I said, 'Yeah.' He said, 'Pretty soon for real.' I knew immediately what he was saying. I said, 'You fuckin' cunt, you gotta overcome that.' Cino put on some Turkish music and did a mad dance."

Joe Davies learned a secret or two after Torrey's death. Cino and Davies had once picked up a college kid from Mississippi, a straight-looking football player, and brought him back for sex at Joe's apartment. They repeated the routine when he returned for school the next fall. *Mississippi* became their code word for pickups. "Every now and then Joe and I would go out 'Let's go look for Mississippi,'" said Davies. "Joe and I would get the straightest-looking kids going. We'd spot a guy and go, 'Aaah! *Mississippi*!' "I didn't know that Torrey would be in the loft watching us do a Mississippi number ... watching from above. Joe knew. That happened five different times. Of course, Joe did this to make Torrey mad. After Torrey was dead I said, 'Mississippi.' Joe said, 'Well, that's not funny anymore.' I said, 'Why not?' He said, 'Torrey's not here to watch.'"

"Joe held himself personally responsible for Torrey's death," claimed Ellen Stewart. "He sent Torrey away after the fire. Torrey called to say, 'Let me come back.' He died the next day. Joe always felt if he hadn't sent him away, he wouldn't have died."

"I thought if we could just make it another few months, if we could make it into next year, we might've left Torrey," said Dodd. "It just kept bein' dark, dark, dark."

"We all worshipped Joe," said Robert Patrick. "And he worshipped Torrey. After that it was downhill."

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"The cast got slim at the end," said Johnny Dodd. "It was thinning down."
"Cino changed," said Phyliss Loubier. "He was full of joy, happiness. Then you could see the mala - the evil, bad, black stuff - coming out."

"I went to see Joe; his eyes were in the back of his head," actress Charlotte Oberley remembered. "It was a very different crowd. I didn't recognize anybody."

"I went by the Cino one day; it was in the afternoon," said Robert Heide. "It was dark, no lights were on, candles burning. Joe was acting very strange. He said, 'I don't have any dates, go over to La Mama.' I said, 'I'm not here for a date.' He said, 'Well, you should go in the bathroom. There's a work of art in there.' I open the bathroom door and there's Ondine, completely nude. And he's jerking himself off, looking in the mirror, obviously very drugged out. In a semi-comatose state. So I closed the door, came back - I think I was sort of stunned - and I sat there for a while. Then Ondine shot Joe up with a needle."

"Cino began to hallucinate, began to think people were after him," Ellen Stewart recalled. "He'd come see me at two, three in the morning. Crying. In a terrible state over sending Torrey away. Later he was hallucinating more and more about having conversations with Jon ... telling me he and Torrey were gonna be together."

"He was drinking a lot," said Kenny Burgess. "Y'know those wine bottles where you have four different kinds of wine and they all have their own stoppers at the top? He'd take out all the stoppers and get a little blend going."

"Drugs, drugs, drugs," sighed Robert Patrick. "Cino got to be flaccid and white and stinking and crazy. Disappearing for several days at a time. Going to several doctors for speed with these drug people."

"Joe had that drained look," recalled Angelo Levullo. "Two weeks before he died, he told me he was on LSD in a cab heading toward the west side. And his head began to open up and his ears fell off. He was having a terrible hallucination. He said he was never gonna take it again. He was so shaken by it, genuinely upset. He knew it was gonna get worse and he had to stop it. But he was on LSD the night he died."

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Michael Smith saw Cino a week before the end. Cino, Dodd, and Ondine were bouncing off the walls at Orion's uptown apartment. "They had been there all night. Tripping, doing speed, crazed out of their minds. We actually wrote a play that night. Joe got very self-destructive and despairing that night, first time I'd ever seen it happen." Smith was so concerned that he checked the bathroom for razor blades.

A few days later John India had breakfast with Joe. "I could see he was in one of his *culcayas* and I said, 'Y'know what? You need to go to my place and sleep it off.' He just pushed it aside."

The next night, apparently high on acid, Cino showed up at Neil Flanagan's apartment. "He was talking suicide, all this stuff," said Neil's wife, Jackie. "Neil and I stayed up literally all night with him, trying to get him into another frame of mind. Trying to get him to go to the hospital. When he finally left in the morning we thought we had it under control."

The phone rang at Johnny Dodd 's apartment that night. Dodd was asleep. Michael Smith answered. It was Joe Cino. "He called for Johnny. He said, 'I'm just calling up to say good-bye.' He sounded very weird. I said, 'Where

are you?' He wouldn't say. It was the crack of dawn, just beginning to get light."

Smith grabbed Johnny's keys and tore over to the Cino. The gate was locked. A revival of *The Madness of Lady Brite* was on at the time. "Joe did not want to do *Lady Brite*," said Bob Heide. "He did not want to see that play. It was Torrey's favorite. I think it reminded Joe of himself. This old fat queen, falling apart."

Once inside, Smith found Joe Cino eviscerating himself. "He was in the back by the coffee machine, covered with blood, trying to stab himself in the chest with this big knife, and it was just bending, just wouldn't go in. It was grisly, utterly horrifying. I tried to get the knife away from him, but he was very slippery from the blood, very strong and very desperate. Possessed. I struggled with him for ten minutes, maybe ... a total bloody mess."

Smith ran into a nearby cheese shop, screaming bloody murder, but was ignored. He somehow managed to flag down an ambulance. "I was always sort of sorry I had done that, because what good did it do?" Cino reportedly expired on the way to St. Vincent's, but was somehow revived.

News spread quickly, and the hospital filled with Cino's friends and admirers, all willing to give blood. "The hospital was stunned," recalled Charles Loubier. "They said they hadn't gotten such a response since World War II. People from all walks of life came down."

But the peritonitis resulting from Cino's wounds proved fatal. He lingered on another three days before dying on April 2, 1967 - Jonathan Torrey's birthday. "I had to identify him at Bellevue," said Loubier. "His face was absolutely at peace."

Bob Dahdah was in the hall of the hospital with Cino's bereaved mother, Mary. "I said to my partner, Mary Boylan, 'Mary, Joe is dead. An era has passed.' A nun was trying to comfort Cino's mother and the nun said, 'Your son was a good man. He did a lot of good things for a lot of people. People who were actors. Well, I'm sorry, excuse me - people who *thought* they were actors.'

"And even in this moment of tragedy, that struck Mary and me as funny. We started laughing. I think Joe would've laughed, too."

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Cino people have tried to make sense of the tragedy, sort out what happened that awful night. Understandably, all have their theories.

"Joe was trying to lose weight - he was obsessed, and that's what killed him," said Matt Baylor. "He was cutting the fat out with the knife." "Everybody always said it was Torrey's death. I never knew," said Michael Smith. "Maybe it was just that the sequence had ended and he knew it. The scene was changing, the world was changing. The possibilities weren't wide open anymore, they were getting defined."

"Being the father, the wonderful daddy to all these people ... I think on some level he probably hated it," speculated Bob Heide.

"Cino was cast adrift in a world he found loveless," said Ondine. "It was, like, '67, right? When '67 came in, that was the beginning of the end. Joe's death was just sort of a phenomenon which created this whirlpool of things - which ended in the Kennedy and the Warhol shootings. It was a very strange time to be alive - especially if you were taking drugs - because you became very sensitive to that. It just permeated everything. Things were getting very vivid. Too vivid. Things were becoming very Corinthian."

"I truly thought Cino would never die," said Johnny Dodd. "He seemed invincible. When the Cino went down, it was an ocean of blood. Everybody was dying, everybody's dreams were dying."

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Actor / playwright Charles Stanley and Michael Smith tried to keep the Caffe Cino afloat. Matt Baylor and Charles Loubier went down one night, but it just wasn't the same. "I never went there again," said Loubier. The Cino shut its doors forever in March 1968. "With Joe's death," said Johnny Dodd, "the work of art was finished; the novel was written."

And what of Andy Milligan? While the Cino sank in its "ocean of blood," Milligan was getting drenched in the theatrical gore of 42nd Street. He would never again enjoy the kind of acclaim he received at the Caffe Cino, but he'd have a new career: filmmaker.

Others weren't so lucky. A shattered dream is hard to bear; it shakes you to the very core. "Most people didn't continue their lives after they left there," said Dodd. "What do you do for a second act?"

Many of the people I interviewed found it difficult to discuss the Cino at all, but reliving the aftermath seemed to literally make their skin crawl. Speech grew halting, glances furtive. "My whole world fell in," said Kenny Burgess. "I didn't have sex for six months." Coming from someone else, the remark would've been disingenuous, but from a wispy, otherworldly entity like Kenny it was moving.

"It's still painful to meet people from the Cino," said Esther Travers. "In the beginning, you'd almost walk to the other side of the street." Charles Loubier told me he couldn't even speak to Johnny Dodd until five years later. He'd go on drunks, and, parking himself across the street at Mona's Royal Roost with bottle in hand, "just wail, literally wail. I never got over it."

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In March 1985 came the requisite Caffe Cino tribute at Lincoln Center, centering on all its superstar alumni. While a much-needed validation of its achievement and influence - with the Cino ambiance lovingly re-created - there were those who felt it was a whitewash. Johnny Dodd later regretted his participation in the affair. "I kept thinkin' Joe Cino would've rolled out of his grave and come right up to my apartment and slapped my face for doing a thing like that." Mention of Andy Milligan, certainly one of the pioneers of the Cino, was nowhere to be found.

In the eighties AIDS hit the Cino circle particularly hard, claiming Charles Loubier, Kenny Burgess, Johnny Dodd, and many others. Barely anyone's left these days. Perhaps the most fitting Cino epitaph came on a cloudy, cold day in 2001. Matt Baylor was huddled on Seventh Avenue, waiting for

the crosstown bus, when he happened to bump into playwright Harry Koutoukas. What a duo. Of all the people who could have survived, let's just say the safe money wasn't on this pair, and the small talk inevitably led to exactly that subject.

"Harry cleared his throat, walked a couple of steps to the gutter and spit - and with that he muttered, 'The lucky ones are dead,'" said Baylor. "I had to laugh."

31 Cornelia Street is now a restaurant, but for years after it was a warehouse for sex toys. "A dildo factory," said Loubier with a chuckle, not long before his death. "Cino would love it. He really would. What an ending."

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CHARLES, A LOVELY MAN. Liked his boys and liked his girls. Chocolate and vanilla. A ten-inch dick. He was the phallus, hee hee.

Everybody who talks about the Cino talks about how *they* were the catalyst - and they weren't. Joe was the catalyst. He'd pick and choose what he wanted. If you fit in, fine; if you didn't, go somewhere else.

It was exhilarating. Now it's copied ... everything's deja vu. Face it, we were the forerunners of everything in that period. Everything that's done in TV and movies, we did at Cino and La Mama. And we did it better. Cino was all original. Ellen Stewart was really a copy of Joe - later overshadowing Joe. But she's no original, never has been. Joe's the father of everything.

That Lincoln Center thing was a wake, a bunch of dead bodies. They only push Lanford Wilson, Marshall Mason, Bob Heide, Bob Patrick, Harry Koutoukas - they took credit for everything. They were very cliquish. Looked down on me, nose in the air. I'd say hi and they didn't even answer. They were very competitive; everybody was. Nobody ever talked about anybody's project but their own. To me, they're just shadows of what they once were.

See, the whole Cino crowd is really a loser crowd. They don't want to make it. They want to *wallow* in cobwebs and dirt and throwing a thing

together. This was the Cino syndrome. Joe, you'd have to force him to go to the laundry and wash his clothes. He'd go around begging for pastries. Week-old pastries is what we sold at the Cino. The cheese was so hard you couldn't chew.

I didn't go into Cino unless there was something I wanted to see. I never had interaction with anybody, babe. I don't fraternize with people. I never included myself, because I was a loner. I just did my job and met the people I should say hello to. You pay your dues. I never sought out posterity.

Basically you just do your own thing. Have your own compound, your own little island, like Brando, or Raymond Burr has his island. Artists never accomplish what they want to, anyway. I don't think you can ever accomplish enough of anything if you're an artist. If you are happy and satisfied, you're shot.

People just drain you, really. The less people like you, the better off you are, because they're a lot of work, friends. You need that when you're young. Ya gotta feed off other people - to learn. As you go through the hard knocks school, get hurt; it's scar tissue. And you have to be able to open that up as an artist. Pick at it, let it bleed a little each time. Then let it cover over again.

Joe hung on until Torrey's birthday. ... It's a shame, but artists, being selfish, are very hypocritical. We're very kind, considerate, caring when we have to be - this is what happens in crises. We're there because we're expected to be there, and we do our little duty, but as soon as it's over, we callously embellish it. This is human nature. There's nothing nice about people.

I go out of my way to be nasty to see what people are made of. I used to have ulcers because I wouldn't say what I felt. Where does it get you to worry about your image? People are no damn good anyway. They really are shits. People are *no damn good.* Especially other artists.

There's evil to every artist. It's almost Jekyll and Hyde. How can you be dimensional as an artist if you're not a devil and an angel? The

better an artist, the more he's devil and angel.

PART II

TIMES SQUARE

1965-1969

5

TIGHT FINGERS

HOPE IS INSCRUTABLE. There's something so innocent about her voice - like a child's. Yet occasionally the wickedest of laughs breaks through. The name always got to me. Sometimes I wondered just what Hope was hoping for.

Most everybody thought Hope Stansbury would be a star. But despite starring roles in several Tom Eyen plays and bit parts in movies, Hope's acting career never really took off. Nor did her love life. There's something bittersweet about Miss Stansbury. "A broken blossom," said actor Martin Reymert.

Interviewing people is a tawdry business. You feign interest in people's lives for a few hours and squeeze the secrets out to smear them across sheets of paper. But I felt strangely protective of Hope. I wanted all her dreams to come true.

Stansbury was a wraithlike figure during the Cino's heyday. She was rail thin, sporting long, straight black locks and clothing to match. In this Addams Family garb, her face painted with, as actor Walter Burns put it, "this strange makeup which was also a mask," Hope was the star waitress at the Caffe Cino - and so emblematic of the scene that she once considered changing her name to Cornelia Street.

"Hope, she's a straight shooter," said Johnny Dodd, who had a brief romance with her one summer. "She never did a mean thing, even though people were mean to her." Others felt she was far more calculating than she let on, and were less than kind. "Obsessed by her own beauty," said actress Helen Hamft, who starred alongside Stansbury in Tom Eyen's *Women Behind Bars*. "Hope plays out this sort of chameleon role of being a sensitive young girl," said playwright Bob Heide. "Underneath it all is a kind of coldness, a shell you can't break."

These days she lives out west, having abandoned her venerable Cornelia Street apartment, a twinkly world unto itself, infamous for its vintage blue

glass mirrors and Snow White memorabilia. She's not in touch with any of the old Cino crowd. "I don't want people to remember me as I was. I feel they have grown older than me...."

The old Hope has been deleted, along with the raven locks and vintage accoutrements. Now blonde and still as attractive as ever, Stansbury could blend into any group at the mall. She's done well for herself in the straight world and seems unsettled recalling her previous incarnation. "Boy, that was another person. The way I talked, my whole speech, everything. I can't believe I was that strange person."

But once upon a time Hope starred in four Andy Milligan movies and wrote the script for Vapors, a 1965 short and Andy's first real film - "a sensitive picture about the St. Mark's Baths," Matt Baylor described it. Hope and Andy frequently clashed and were far from the best of friends, but it was Andy Milligan who first set her before a movie camera in Depraved! as an evil lesbian talent agent. She remembered watching Andy hunched over an upright Moviola, editing her scene. It was the first time she'd seen herself on celluloid. "I was tripping when he called me up. There I was on the screen. It was like my astral projection ... there was something exciting about it."

One of three sisters, Hope Stansbury grew up in a series of grim locales in Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. It was a family that could have oozed out of the pages of Tennessee Williams. Father Stan was a typewriter salesman, while mother Betty carried on a flagrant long-term affair with a man known as Flex.

"It was not talked about," said Gerry Matthews, Flex's daughter and Hope's childhood friend. "Nobody acknowledged it." As a young girl, Hope spent many hours sitting in a window, waiting. "If it was on a Friday and she didn't come home, that was the worst. I don't know what she saw in Flex - he had a nasty temper."

Stansbury was a misfit. Unlike her sisters, "Hope was painfully thin," said Matthews. "She wouldn't go to school because she hated gym.... She used to wear a towel around her hips to make herself look bigger."

Hope lost herself in television, watching Vivien Leigh on *The Late Show* and dreaming of Hollywood. "All I could do was think of acting. I like being able to be someone else. Fantasy. You forget about yourself." Life became a dream world of movie magazines and a bit of petty thievery. "I used to steal nail polish remover. I was addicted to it. The smell made me feel good."

While Betty continued to chase after Flex, the Stansbury family landed in a tiny South Philadelphia apartment. "Stan drank," said Matthews. "Things went down the tubes really badly." Not one for housecleaning, Hope's mother would just "flick the roaches off. Hope would have a fit."

She took refuge with a group of characters she met in Trenton, including a flamboyant hairdresser, Karl Cramer, and a tough drag queen named Jackie Leighton. "Hope had just dropped out of high school," said Jack Delucia, one of the gang. "She weighed about forty-five pounds. Hit us all like gangbusters - I mean, we'd never seen anything like that. She had sticks and stones thrown at her because she wore an enormous amount of makeup - the amount people in New Jersey wouldn't wear at ten o'clock at night, she wore at ten o'clock in the morning!"

Karl and Hope became a very particular sort of odd couple. "It was funny about Hope, because sexuality was never a part of it," said Delucia. "You never felt like she was trying to get laid. Hope was sort of above it."

Karl concocted outrageous hairdos and fashions for Hope to parade in front of their little group. "Karl made her pretty and dressed her up," said Gerry Matthews. "It was very theatrical. They loved her to come down steps, do presentations. It was like Karl was walking a doll. It was creepy."

Eventually Hope followed her friends to that mecca for misfits, Greenwich Village. "Mother was crying when I left. I didn't have a dime in my pocket." Somehow she stumbled onto the Caffe Cino. "I walked in and there was Johnny and Dean and Joe. I was fascinated by it. This is what I came to New York for. I was in awe."

For a while Stansbury lived at Frank Thompson's. She worked in the gallery for room and board, the only female in Thompson's den of sin and

pornography. "Funny, nothing bothered me then," Hope recalled blankly. "I could see those pictures on the floor ... it didn't affect me. I don't understand why."

She became fixated on a young English actress who then ran off to Mexico with some guy. "I envied her, it wasn't a good feeling," said Hope, who tried to hang onto the girl via some pilfered possessions. "I wanted her clothes. I was very obsessed by her - that's when I started getting an identity crisis. I never liked who I was, you see, so I had to become somebody else."

Stansbury had Karl dye her hair black, then rummaged through Frank Thompson's drag trunk, wrapping herself in his long black shrouds, castoffs from decades past. "Hopie always used to say, 'Oh, my fashions are decomposing - what am I going to do?'" recalled actor Martin Reymert. Stansbury was way ahead of her time in terms of her vintage tastes. "She had these World War II boots and everyone would stare and laugh," said Kenny Burgess. "Two years later everyone was wearing them."

She went to great lengths to hide her sooty South Philly heritage, claiming she'd been raised in England. "One day Hope said, 'We motored to Long Island,'" remembered Matt Baylor. "That got me right away - 'We motored,' with this little English accent! Nobody's 'motored' in this country for years! You *drive*."

With her cobwebby dresses, white powdered makeup, and outrageous black eyeliner accenting her long, jet-black hair, Stansbury's morbid beauty stunned the Caffe Cino crowd. Director Jim Perkinson characterized her look as "Jennifer Jones, Ava Gardner, and Vampira - all rolled into one."

The result was so over the top that many questioned her gender. "She was so incredibly exotic that you had the impression she was a transvestite - womanhood heightened to such an extreme that it just didn't seem real," said actor / director Eric Concklin. Warhol drag superstar Candy Darling is said to have based his look largely on Hope.

Dubbed La Waspina, a.k.a. Lady Hope (modified from Lady Doriden, allegedly after a fondness for a certain pharmaceutical), Stansbury was a favorite of Joe Cino's. "He truly loved her mystery, her beauty," said Johnny

Dodd. "Cino was sort of like a kid about it - 'Oh, look at Miss Hope, isn't she beautiful?'" "You felt like she was going to shatter like glass at any minute," said Helen Hamft. "Cino was very protective of her."

Stansbury soon got her own apartment a few doors down from Thompson's. Stuffed with blue mirrors, strange little cats, and much-coveted *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* memorabilia ("the beasts that make the beauty even more beautiful," quipped Bob Heide, who felt Stansbury saw a bit of herself in the cartoon goddess), Hope's abode was "a combination of Miss Havisham's and Disneyland," said Jim Perkinson. One felt chosen to accompany Hope on an acid trip in such a luminous locale.

It seemed a sure bet to all that Hope's mug would soon be immortalized via those fickle flickering magic lanterns of tinsel town. Salvador Dali asked her to pose; Carlo Ponti gave her a screen test. "People were drawn to her like a magnet - I mean the big people, the great people," said actor Walter Burns. But Hope had a hard time coping. "If you went to a party, she'd go hide in the corner; if we went to a restaurant, we had to take the table furthest in the corner. I used to say, 'Hope, you can't be a star and hide behind the menu.'"

Somehow Stansbury conjured up a novel script about the sort of anonymous relationships and rituals gay males cultivate in bathhouses. She called it *A Night at the Baths* a.k.a. *The Sunflower*. Intended for the theater, a copy slipped into Milligan's hands, and since he'd been toying with a movie camera, he gave Hope a couple hundred bucks for the right to do it as a film, eventually titled *Vapors*. Andy set it in a Lower East Side landmark - the St. Mark's Baths.

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Milligan shot with an Auricon, a 16mm newsreel camera. The sound was not a separate unit - most features were recorded on quarter-inch tape, then transferred to mag stock to be cut in sync to the picture - but a low-quality direct-to-film optical track that ran a second ahead of the picture. The fact that picture and sound were irrevocably wedded meant that Andy had to build pauses or beats into the blocking of the film to account for the sound

layover - a restraint that contributes to his pictures' odd staginess. The parallax viewfinder was also inaccurate, meaning Milligan had to guess at his frame composition. The Auricon was utterly unsuitable for making feature films, and Milligan would create his best work with it.

Milligan built the sets - dummy bathhouse cubicles complete with graffiti - in a couple of unused rooms adjacent to his apartment at 199 Prince Street. He nicked some robes from St. Mark's Baths for costumes. Most of those working on or appearing in *Vapors* would constitute Milligan's core group for the next half-dozen years or so.

Matt Baylor, who lived briefly at 199 Prince, was Andy's "crew" as well as an extra in the cast. Thomas, the lead, was played by Andy's roommate Gerry Jacuzzo.

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Milligan and Jacuzzo were an odd couple. Jacuzzo was restrained, considerate, and neat as a pin - basically the complete opposite of Andy. Hal Borske recalled Milligan going into "an outraged, sputtering conniption" over Gerry's fastidiousness, offended that Jacuzzo kept the bills in his wallet carefully folded and all facing the same way. But their working relationship was "cool and professional," added Borske. "On the set no one would dream they were ever more than acquaintances."

Some observers felt that Jacuzzo, a loyal friend to many, was eclipsed by the relationship, with more than one person suggesting that Andy had a sinister hold over him. "Gerry was fun to be with," said Phoebe Mooney. "But after he met Andy he really changed - he didn't have any sense of humor. And he took on all Andy's mannerisms. His voice - it was like hearing Andy. I thought it was bizarre. Spooky."

Jacuzzo would appear in six of Andy's films (either under his own name or under the monicker Jeremy Brooks) as well as co-scripting one, *The Filthy Five*. Gaunt, balding, and imperious, Jacuzzo was perhaps the finest actor ever to grace a Milligan picture. A riveting onscreen presence in *Torture Dungeon* and *Vapors*, it's a shame Jacuzzo didn't go farther.

Rounding out the threadbare cast was the dour, heavy-browed Cino actor / director Bob Dahdah as Mr. Jaffe, the older married man, and an assortment of actors / nonactors as queens trolling the St. Mark's hallways, among them Larry Ree, a tall, accomplished "male ballerina" and West Village legend. Gary Stone, [*A pseudonym.*] one of the more interesting creatures in the Milligan talent pool, provided the brief full frontal nudity at the end of the film. "In *Vapors* there were people playing themselves," said Jacuzzo. "People who couldn't verbalize a sentence. Andy did that all the time - threw people together who couldn't act and people who acted very well."

One of those who acted very well was *Vapors*' lead queen, Hal Borske, a Newark-born actor / writer whose stiff shock of blond hair enabled him to spend a childhood summer working a carny act as "Electro, The Boy Struck By Lightning." With his deep, syrupy voice and seen-it-all deadpan delivery, Borske was part of the younger wave at the Cino. "Hal had a fine sensitivity to things often masked under the guise of clown," said Charles Loubier. Borske, whose brother John would serve as Andy's cowriter and only real technical assistant on many of the early pictures, was a charter member of Andy Milligan's stock cast-and-crew company and worked with him right up to the end of Andy's life. No Milligan picture is complete without Hal getting whipped, beaten, set on fire, or otherwise abused.

Borske would also contribute the title *Vapors* one night at Mona's Royal Roost after listening to Andy bitch about Hope's titles. "I told him the catch phrase for St. Mark's was 'Our Lady of the Vapors.' Andy said, '*Vapors*! That's it, babe.'"

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I LOVED SO MANY FILMS FROM THE THIRTIES AND FORTIES - they had real heart in them. *A Man's Castle* - Spencer Tracy and Loretta Young. A wonderful Depression film. Hobo drama. Very downbeat. *Wild Boys of the Road*, Wellman picture - runaway kids on trains in the twenties. Sombre black and white tone. *The Grapes of Wrath* - ohhh, the most depressing film, *brilliantly* done. Very anti-American; vicious attack on the system. Nothing superfluous. Any horror films or films that had historical themes - like *Brother Orchid*, Edward G. Robinson. Mobster ends up with

monks, raising flowers in a monk's outfit! It's a wonderful film, very offbeat, really way out in left field. *The Fountainhead*, that was way ahead of its time. A real S&M film. He conquers her. There's a shot with a riding crop and boots - it's very strange ... really an interesting film.

George Arliss - best American character actor in the world, my favorite actor. See *Richelieu*. There isn't a moment he isn't real on the screen. I never liked Paul Muni; he's a fake. John Garfield's not a good actor particularly, either. Close your eyes and listen - whereas Edward G. Robinson and James Cagney always sound real.

Mae West - brilliant. Do you know Mae West never knew her character until a drag queen showed her how to be a lady? Bette Davis - she tore into everything, really gave her all. Very theatrical, but she would do ugly things most actresses wouldn't do. In *Now, Voyager* she plays a dumpy ugly girl with thick eyebrows and thick glasses. *All About Eve*, though, doesn't hold up. Became a caricature of herself.

Fifties films are not good. Once Kazan got to Hollywood, it all fell apart. They got pretentious. They all copied *Giant, Rebel Without a Cause*. Nick Ray, he's pretentious. That slow, empty technique.

In the thirties and forties, movies were brilliant. They were turned out by the studios and they didn't dwell on anything. They didn't pretend, they just ground them out.

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Before Breakfast was the first film I shot. Thirty-minute play with Ellen Maris. We filmed it after we ran it a week at La Mama's. And a short scene - five or seven minutes - from *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, with Hope. We had a little 8mm Fairchild. It was a mag-striped 8mm - the camera had just come out. A kidney-shaped thing, it weighed a ton.

Then this guy by the name of Art Ford, a big disc jockey in the late fifties, early sixties - nicest guy in the world, big, huge guy, six-foot-six, a tiny little wife - he used to come down to my dress shop on 4th Street, stop in and look at things. And I told him I wanted to make a film. He had a friend

with an Auricon - what was it, $500, $600? And he said, "You can start with that. But you can't make a feature with it." I heard this is what Warhol used and so I purchased it. [*Andy Warhol, Paul Morrisey, and John Waters were all Auricon users*.]

Vapors was a camera test. The cost was negligible - a couple hundred. We just did it as a lark. I didn't understand the whole damn thing about the sunflower. This masculine guy who's married ends up in this gay place; he's repressed and he ends up with these queens giving him this big paper sunflower! All Hope's info was given to her secondhand by demented queens.

Hope takes direction well, fine actress. Very opinionated young lady. They were going to groom her. Opportunity like that only knocks once. She'd probably be a star on Hollywood Boulevard, whatever that means. You know you have to pay $3,500 for it, that star?

Gerry was in *Alice in Wonderland* at the Cino and he was wonderful in it. He played four roles and I thought, "My God, now there's a good actor." Gerry's best qualities? Sincerity, consummate professionalism, allegiance. Actor's actor. A gentleman. Gerry was never too happy with me as a director - he likes to sit around and discuss. Worries about what people think, runs frightened through life. Foot draggers, Capricorns.

Vapors was shot in a vacant back apartment at 199 Prince. I paid $63 a month. Shot it in three or four days. The queens - they were like the three witches from *Macbeth*. They kept pokin' their heads through doors and screaming and making campy remarks. It's a very weird little play. At the end this guy comes in - Gary Stone, with a cock down to there. I had him walk naked right to the camera. That was the end of the film - the dick walking right to the camera, hee hee.

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My first homosexual thing was when I was twelve years old. Fort Snelling. This was an older sergeant. He bought me popcorn and he put my hand on his penis. Of course, I was scared stiff because of my father. I never told him, 'cause there would've been hell to pay. Things

like that happen when you're twelve, thirteen. That's why it's a such a dangerous time. You're so impressionable.

Dominant mothers turn out homosexual sons. I have a big theory about that. When a man is weak in the family and the mother rules the roost, you'll find they have homosexual tendencies or lean in that direction. Most of the guys that you meet that are gay have very strong mothers. The mother's idolized, the father's hated - or usually taught to be hated by the mother. And the girl who sees her mother beaten by the father will turn out lesbian. These are the basics, babe. Standard patterns.

In every male there's a female; in every female there's a male. In the womb something happens, they go one way or another. Every male and every female has something for their own sex, it could be at fourteen, twenty-eight, forty.

And every man at one point or another has a desire to be submissive to another male. It's a fantasy thing. Every male has to have that one homosexual contact in order to be recharged as a male. I think most men will have an entanglement - it might be thirty years, thirty weeks, thirty hours. They have to have that one male contact, that one male bonding, to be able to go back out and be male to the women and the rest of the men in the world. After this fling they're reassured of their masculinity.

Most who have problems with homosexuality - who are violently against it - they never satiate this interest or subconscious fascination. Those who never satisfy their curiosity, I don't think they can be complete men.

There's an awful lot of women who have female lovers in America. More common than with men. It 's not accepted for men - in America, anyway. In Europe they all think like Gertrude Stein - a hole is a hole is a hole. They hug each other and kiss each other and they don't think anything of it. In America, it's sick. The worst homosexual environment in the world is in America.

And sports in America is so sick, so fuckin' sick. That's how they get their homosexual jollies. The patting on the ass. It's the football thing - watching the guys pat, the hugging. They can't *do* it, so they watch it. You see them in a bar - the guys are all hugging each other, and the girls are in the *other* corner. The males get drunker and more homosexual.

And that's why all these so-called males watch so much sports. It's the body contact. They're looking at *the bodies*. They can do it legally, see and watch it. And women know this, women are very jealous of it because they know what it is. Men won't admit it. Only those who are very, very honest. Now they're getting more open about it - hugging, kissing, ass-grabbing. I can't stand to watch it. So you're gonna have body contact with another male, go out and *have contact*. Don't double entendre.

We should be able to hold hands with a buddy. Kiss on a cheek good night. Girls the same. It's something that is lacking, something they need. Even the most masculine hetero man has a homo tendency inside of him.

Now, of course, they'll show a nude guy holding a baby. Or they kiss boys now. Now you see the father hugging them and kissing them. Which is healthier in a way, but it's also exposing the true underbelly of the way we really are - women don't like men and men don't like each other. Especially in America.

We're male and female impersonators. We don't like each other anymore. Men and women - they're not meant to be together. They just breed, that's what keeps them together. This is what is, darlin.'

When I had the dress shop the most homosexual clients I had were strippers, showgirls, airline stewardesses, and models. Same as wrestlers, boxers, airline pilots, football players. A lot of wrestlers were gay. A true homosexual is attracted to a male. A *male*. Female to female. The ones who are halfway cases - a woman who is afraid of a man - will get a butch lesbian who's a halfway case. A masculine man who's afraid

of women will get a transvestite. So they're not completely homosexual. They're homosexual but bisexual in their taste because it's safe.

True homosexuality is very masculine guys or very femme women living together. They're pure homosexuals. That's what I found through sixty years of research. That's what homosexual is - it means "one's one." And the ones that run around with a butch lez or a swishy guy, they're not as homosexual as the two football players or the two airline stewardesses.

An American Airlines pilot used to come into the shop on Madison Avenue. Married, had four kids, really a masculine guy. He used to come in on Saturday looking for a dress for his wife. And he kept looking at this one silk number, a Spanish fandango type of thing. Spaghetti straps, flounce ...

Three or four Saturdays he'd come in, talking about his wife. He bought one or two dresses for her - and about the fourth or fifth Saturday he was in ... talking about this one dress. A very pretty dress. And he used to get sweaty, more and more sweaty. Finally he asked me one day, "Can I put it on?" I said, "You're kidding." He said, "No. Oh please. Just for a minute."

And he went into the dressing room and put the damn thing on and then he came out not sweating, just completely released. And I said, "Are you a homosexual?" And he said, "Oh God, no - I could never have sex with a man. But when I was a young boy my aunt and my mother were dressmakers and I was always their model. I love silks and I wear panties and" - he lifted his dress and showed me - "silk hose. My wife knows this - I got four kids who don't, but my wife knows. I come to dress up in women's undies, she goes to the store and buys me things - and we've been happily married for seventeen years - but I have to have women's clothes."

See how much families fuck us up? This is what happens with the way we've been bruised by our mothers. It's always the female, always the mother.

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People into S&M are usually insecure. They say in every S there's an M, but it can be mental or physical. All English are masochists - they're trained to be by parents. Don't do this, don't do that. Trained to be sheep. They turn out more Ms than anybody in the world.

Gary Stone - the walking cock at the end of *Vapors* - is very masochistic. Stone can't stand to be touched. That's one of his problems as an actor - somebody puts their hand on his shoulder and he freezes. The English are untouchable. Some people have a weak body language and they're vulnerable. Gary Stone has a weak street body language.

First thing you notice on a man is how he holds his hands, if his fingers are tight together, not loose. That's how you can tell how strong a man is, basically. It's got nothing to do with his slightness or build or anything.

Gary's fingers are pulled tight together. I said, "Gary, will you *please* work on your hands?" A real man's hands, you can see space between his fingers whenever he's talking, hands on the table, in the lap. If they're tight together, that gives you an inkling of how weak a man is. It has nothing to do with how strong he is - it has to do with body language. His arrogance, his comfort in movement.

Street burglars, assault men, they get this - "This one is a good mark." You send out vibrations or you don't. You can walk into a room and make everybody turn or you can't. You go to a party and the ones picking at their clothes are so insecure. Then the bummiest person comes in - like Howard Hughes. He dressed like a bum but he had this strength about him. Turned heads. Aaron Burr had that.

I have a body language you don't fuck with. Always have. I can walk down the street and people stare. That's why I've always done very well making out with anybody - male, female, whatever. It has nothing to do with looks, the body, the vessel - it has to do with the liquid inside it. An aura. I see a lot of Mexican women cruising me at the bus stop because of my eyes. That's all you see in bed - eyes.

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I met Gary Stone hanging nude upside-down in a doorway. True. At Bob Milne's place. Bob Milne was the one-armed king of S&M in New York in those days. Collected and sold doll furniture, had mixed parties, more homo than hetero. See, in the sixties, everybody was experimenting. Bisexuality, homosexuality, trisexuality. There were no rules. It was the beginning of the free society we have today.

Milne lived on Prince Street. First time I was invited to one of Bob's parties, I thought it was just, oh, a tea party or something and I walk in and all the lights are on, the music's going and here's Gary Stone hung upside down in a doorway, naked. I said, "Hi! How are you?"

Gary Stone had a great love affair going with a Great Dane, hee hee. Well - they don't talk back. Gary's a gentleman - except when his clothes come off. Then he's like a wolf. Very attractive street guy. Known for his big dick. A complete masochist.

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Gary Stone is a hero of mine. He's done it all. But things aren't so easy once you've climbed the mountain, as he well knows. "Now I'm so jaded, so blasé - somebody comes on as an S, I think, 'Ahhhh - *M*.' Most sadists I know are masochists in disguise. People I've known who were sadists for a long time turn into masochists later in life." He frowned. "I think it disappoints a lot of people, because sadists are hard to come by, *tremendously* hard to come by. Everybody's a masochist, especially in America."

He sighed. "I am constantly criticizing what is happening *while* it's happening. For example, when I'm hung upside down, I don't *want* to have to say to them, 'Would you mind adjusting the ankles so the blood has stopped going in my feet? They should *know* that. But *no*. They don't. It takes 100 percent of the fun out of it. It's hard to find a person to do these things at all, but finding one who's got the gumption to do it properly is nearly impossible.

"It's like being jaded, isn't it? I've seen so much of it. Y'know that song Peggy Lee used to sing - 'Is That All There Is?' I can't accept playacting anymore. I've got to believe. If somebody came up to me *now* and said 'Lick my boots' I'd say 'Maybe - I'll consider it.' I find that to lick somebody's boots now they've got to say 'Lick my boots' and I've got to think '*Yes*, I *must* do it.' I've got to *believe* it, y'see. When I find that person, that will be ... *wonderful*."

A rugged-looking chap who speaks in a lilting English accent, Gary Stone is an easygoing, likable fellow. We could've been discussing stamp collecting or gardening, the stock market, even saving the whales. Yet on this day we were reminiscing over how he'd been paddled till he bled, abused while hung upside down naked, and penetrated by dogs and snakes.

There was always an audience present for these nefarious events. It was an essential ingredient. Widely noted for being a masochist, Gary prefers to emphasize the exhibitionist ingredient of his sexual shenanigans. "I'm not interested in doing these things in my own home - I'm only interested in doing them in *public*."

He pointed out what he felt was a sadism fallacy. "A guy beats another guy because he wants to hurt him - *not so at all*. In 99 percent of the cases, they're playacting. One plays the Marine Sergeant, and one the New Recruit. There's two very distinct types of S&M. The guy who likes to have a school-type beating - he stands up straight with a cane or paddle, as they would do in school. Or there's the *Two Years Before the Mast* type, where they're strung up and flogged." His eyes gleamed. "Personally, *Two Years Before the Mast* has always been much more exciting."

Many larger-than-life tales are floating around about Gary. He chuckled as I recounted some of his alleged misdeeds and measurements. "I must've shown my cock to more people than *anybody* else I can think of - yet nobody seems to realize that it's not a very big one." This struck me as, well, a rather masochistic remark.

More philosophy. "The masochist has *always* controlled the sadist. Ninety-nine percent of the time the bottom is the one who controls it. The top is the

one servicing the bottom. If he hits them too hard, they will certainly let him know about it. Because when the masochist says 'Enough,' the sadist stops. It's like the old joke - the masochist says, 'Beat me.' And the sadist says, 'No.' Which is *true* sadism."

Stone mused on the meaning of it all. "If a psychiatrist got hold of me, I'm not sure this sort of exhibitionism thing is a very good comment on one's psychological state. I think an exhibitionist is someone who feels that they are not noticed enough and wants to be noticed in life."

While Gary preferred not to discuss his childhood in detail, let's just say Andy felt Stone was a walking illustration of one of his theories: absentee father plus domineering mother equals English masochist. "Y'know, mothers don't know what they're doing when they bring up kids. She was possessive, totally possessive. I was scared of my own shadow. It was always a case of, 'No, you can't *do* that!' One of my mother's problems in life was that she felt that she was never noticed. Perhaps because I was brought up in such a way - being a shrimp - maybe I feel that no one will even notice unless I do something outrageous...."

The first outrageous thing Gary did for Andy Milligan was flash his member for a couple of seconds in *Vapors*."In those days I still was doing as I was told. Andy said, 'Do you want to be in a movie? OK, take your clothes off.' It was very shocking." Stone's eyes lit up. "I loved it. It was a great thrill. An honor, in fact. Andy is a shrewdie, isn't he? He knew exactly how far he could go with people ... just how far he could twist 'em around." Later, after doing other nude scenes in Andy's films, Stone was mesmerized by the sight of his body on a lurid front outside of Times Square's World Theatre. "I was quite happy about it. I was always brought up to be quiet, sit down, keep your mouth closed, and here I was somebody at last - even if it was only a nude person."

Stone would be Andy's constant companion over the decades. He was just about the only person the very private Milligan requested to accompany him in his death-rattle days. They never had sex - although on vacation in Puerto Rico, Gary picked up some rough trade and Milligan sat in the shadows playing voyeur. Stone figured Andy was identifying with his

masochist role in the affair. Amazingly, Milligan never let on to Gary about his sadistic side - at least not sexually.

"Andy sort of hated everybody, didn't he? He loved his cat much more than people. People really annoyed him. No one was really up to his standards.

"I'm very grateful to Andy. He understood my exhibitionism better than I did. He knew how much I would get off on it." Stone grinned. "You see, Andy *understood*."

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And now, *Vapors*. We see a grainy shot of Gerry Jacuzzo as Thomas, a young, unsmiling, anguished-looking creature riding the subway. Cheap superimposed stencilled credits crawl the screen. Editing, Gerald Jackson; Sound, Joi Gogan; Settings, Dick Fox; Costumes, Raffine - all of them aliases Andy adopted and continued to use in film after film for decades. The only soundtrack is a jaunty, moth-eaten player piano - recorded in Frank Thompson's timeless tomb. The first glimpse of Andy Milligan's world, and already the seediness overwhelms.

Thomas walks the street, then enters St. Mark's Baths, gets a room, undresses and sits, his hollow, half-sneering face filling the screen in unsettling closeup. This is a very claustrophobic film, as many of Andy's would be. After the intro, the action is limited to just two locales - the sooty, porno-graffitied room Thomas has occupied, and the dark bathhouse hallways populated by a gaggle of hysterical queens who periodically pop into Jacuzzo's room for the unwanted exclamation point.

The queens are perhaps the best thing in the film. A swarm of giggling, leering heads all bunched together like a traveling pumpkin patch, they natter and chatter in a bizarre, uncontrolled manner. This is one of Milligan's trademarks - a childish frenzy that suddenly erupts without warning or apology. "He doesn't have enough muscles for me," one of the screaming mimis clucks to the rest of the flock after giving Thomas the once-over. "I'm looking for a nice stacked Greek number tonight. But you can go on in, Thumbelina. I'm tipping on."

Mr. Jaffe enters, a sombre, blockhead first-timer who moans about his wife wearing cold cream and curlers to bed and leaving her sanitary pads on the sink for all to see. Thomas is sympathetic, and the pair engage in a fetishistic discussion of feet before a round of "This Little Piggie." The menace of the outside world is everywhere: a stranger's eye silently peering at them through a hole in the wall, the queens rushing in to disrupt with their manic camping.

Mr. Jaffe speaks of the drowning death of his son, a child he fears wasn't his. After the funeral Jaffe disposed of all the death flowers except one lone sunflower. Today is the anniversary of his son's death, he tells Thomas, whom he says reminds him of his son. The queens lurch back in to shatter the intimacy. "Faggots! Get the fuck out!" shouts Thomas, decrying the bedlam of the baths. "It's like a hell for men ... an insane asylum for homosexuals."

An emotional Mr. Jaffe leaves, telling Thomas he has left something at the front desk he wants to give him. When he fails to return, the queens enter with his gift: one huge, absurd crepe-paper sunflower. Thomas begins to weep, then mutters, "This ... little ... piggie."

Suddenly there's a new figure at the door: a handsome, pantherlike male with eyebrows arched. "I'm sorry - did you say something?" he says to Thomas who asks him in. He undoes his robe as he walks toward the camera, playing with himself as the shot zeroes in on his manhood, which fills the screen. Fadeout, the end.

A shocking exclamation point for 1965, this last scene serves to obliterate all the psychosexual babble that precedes it. It was not in Hope's screenplay, and she was still miffed about it decades later. "All I know was he had an *erection* at the end of *my* movie - I didn't like *that* much."

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Vapors features many hallmarks of Andy's work - mundane, slice-of-life dialogue; crazy compositions starkly lit; a camera you can frequently hear running in the background - but one point has to be stressed: this wasn't Milligan's screenplay, nor his idea of sexuality. Andy seemed indifferent to

the script, taking pride only in jolting the world with full-frontal male nudity.

But *Vapors* was a landmark step beyond the usual gay bounce-a-ball pinup kitsch. Here were real people expressing their homosexuality on the big screen, and although many now discount Stansbury's script for its methody neurosis, others were genuinely moved. "It was an older guy picking up a younger trick," said Kenny Burgess. "I thought that Hope really had insight into her gay friends - I think if a gay person had written it, it would've been schmaltzy." Hope even screened it for Tennessee Williams - an acquaintance at the time - and claimed he was very taken with the film.

Billed as "A major homosexual film comparable to Anger's *Fireworks*," *Vapors* was to premiere December 3, 1965, at the Bridge, a theater at 4 St. Mark's Place that featured experimental films and such counterculture NYC rock as the Fugs, but, according to Gary Stone, the screening was raided by police on account of the shocking cock. After a censor strip was added to the last scene to cover Stone's offending member, *Vapors* went on to play to standing-room-only crowds at the Filmmakers Cinemateque on West 41st Street.

A year or two later, *Vapors* was blown up to 35mm and, moving from art house to grindhouse, became a smash hit on the sexploitation circuit, advertised as "the Year's Most Controversial Underground Film." It was at this point that Milligan hooked up with Phil Todaro.

One of those shadowy, toupee-topped figures that used to haunt Times Square, in 1965 Todaro relocated to New York City from Buffalo, where he had produced and cowritten "Wild Weekend," a hit by the Rockin' Rebels.

Distributor William Mishkin - whom Todaro had known from the theater business in Buffalo - introduced him to a pinky-ringed piranha named Bingo Brandt who owned 42nd Street's Rialto Theatre, a skin-flick money machine, among others. Todaro managed the Pix Theater for Brandt before becoming right-hand man for Chellee Wilson, empress of the Eighth Avenue sex theaters.

Todaro - who cranked out a few sexploitationers himself with partner Phil Leonardi under the aegis Leo-Todd Films-brought *Vapors* to Wilson, who in 1967 booked it into her normally heterosexploitation-only Cameo Theater at 44th and Eighth Avenue. "From TEA ROOMS to STEAM ROOMS - *VAPORS*," announced teaser ads that ran in the *Village Voice* the week before it premiered. Via ancient-looking art deco cards, the coming attraction trailer emphasized aspects both sociological ("A Motion Picture of real life in a homosexual environment") and artistic ("Filmed by the New Leader in underground filmmaking - ANDY MILLIGAN.") *Vapors* was a sensation.

"*Vapors* created a stir because it was the first gay-type thing ever put out about the bathhouse," said Todaro. "It ran at the Cameo as an extra added attraction, which we got prime film rental for $200. More than *Metro* was getting for their shorts. Columbia was selling shorts for $75 a week."

Although nearly forgotten today, people recall *Vapors* playing to attentive crowds wherever it was shown. Gerry Jacuzzo saw it in a Hollywood theater in the summer of '66. "It was a packed house. People got very wrapped up into it."

Yet Milligan claimed not to have seen a dime of the profits. He had less than flattering things to say about both Chellee Wilson and Phil Todaro. "Andy felt that way with everybody - that everybody gave him the shaft," countered Todaro. "He forgets the money he took in as advances and money he spent in overbudgets."

Vapors was only a preview of Milligan's disastrous financial misfortune. Next came William Mishkin - and via Mishkin, 42nd Street.

6

ALL SIZZLE, NO STEAK

SOMETIMES IT WAS THE WRONG REEL, sometimes the wrong movie. At times the focus was off, the screen was ripped, and the sound didn't work. There were feverish nights when audience reaction became so frenzied that a near-riot ensued. In the grim final years, people were occasionally murdered in the theaters. It was insane. And it was the greatest place to see movies on earth. The Crossroads of the Nation, the Movie Capital of the World, the Great White Way, 42nd Street, a.k.a. the Deuce.

Let's face it: at least in later years, the Deuce was a shithole. An entire block of teeming, sweaty anthill humanity, all on the make one way or another. Call me a romantic - heh heh - but I always remember how the street looked late at night in the rain. Walking out of the Liberty at an ungodly hour on a Sunday night, the decrepit lobby dead except for some waxen usher giving you the greasy eyeball as he mechanically tossed day-old popcorn, you'd bust out of the fingerprint-smudged glass doors and fall into the street encountering God knows what awful scene.

A bunch of thugs selling weed / pills / whatever on the corner, a very rigged traveling three-card monte game, a hopelessly aggressive megaphone-wielding preacher, all competing for the suckers' attentions. A lone nut pontificating on the meaning of life while huddled by a steaming hot dog cart. Monster-distorto boomboxes assaulting your senses. Missing-letter marquees (always a few spent lightbulbs) reflected in the wet street. A solitary yellow cab trolling for customers, slow and sharklike. And the air, it almost smelled fresh.

Now awful, awful things happened on that block every second the clock ticked - murder, mayhem, worse - but I never got popped on Forty-Two. It was only when my well-meaning but know-nothing friends talked me into walking to the Port Authority via "safer" 43rd Street that some trembling dope fiend shoved a gun in my face. Go figure. Our Lady of Sinema watched over me, ahahaha. Naaah - just the luck of an ignorant movie-loving fool.

Lemme tell ya, it was vastly different from having every fucking piece of celluloid smut Internet-available and at your sticky fingertips twenty-four hours a day, to be safely studied in monklike solitude whilst bathed in the sick, lonely television light. The Deuce - I miss it.

It was, I have to say, heavenly. Three Big Hits all day, nearly all night. More than a dozen theaters flickering away, some with multiple screens. You could spend all night bouncing from grindhouse to grindhouse like a human pinball, gorging yourself on all manner of low / big-budget crap. And the audience was right there in the trenches with you every frame of the way. Misfits from all walks of life and all manner of race (but largely male) who frequently provided a better show than the feature in progress. People talked back to the screen. They fought with each other, and I mean hand-to-hand combat. They had sex in the men's room and in the balconies. A communal experience, 42nd Street, and it all spun around movies.

Back in the sixties, it was a somewhat tamer place. One gleaming city block, with at least eleven theaters, all crammed in between joke shops, newsstands, and such Deuce landmarks as Grant's hot dog palace and the legendary Hubert's Museum - a carny offshoot with live freak shows and a flea circus. The theaters were in much better shape then, and the endless marquees imbued the block with an exciting, unnatural light. Drugs hadn't yet taken over, nor pornography - although there were plenty of illicit things to see. And "illicit" in Times Square movie theaters in the mid-sixties meant sexploitation.

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New York's West Village waterfront. A parked truck. Inside stands Cal, a tough customer with thinning red hair, dressed in the requisite worn Levi's ensemble. Before him kneels Cherry, a hooker. A blonde tub of lard, she unzips his pants and attempts to close the deal. Lost in cheap ecstasy, the trick grabs her by the hair. It comes off in Cal's hands - a wig. Turns out she's a he. Cal angrily ejects Cherry - and her hair - from the truck. She waddles off to Dusty, a fellow working girl stationed nearby. Cherry relates her tale of woe as she repositions her wig.

Dusty heads off for the big rig, determined to fix Cal's wagon. She's all woman, and once inside the truck, wows Cal. But he's no match for this conniving hooker. First she slips a hand around his waist and lifts his wallet, and then, when Cal gets his pants off and things get cozy, she starts screaming. The panicked, half-naked john jumps from the truck and scurries away, unaware that he's been fleeced. Dusty emerges from the truck victorious.

"Look what I got!" she says to Cherry, flashing forty bucks cash.

"Oooooh, fabulous*!" squeals the drag queen. "I need some new dresses! C'mon, honey - Fourteenth Street here we come!"*

- FROM MILLIGAN'S *FLESHPOT ON 42ND STREET [OK, so using Fleshpot as an example is cheating. Released in 1972, it came very much at the tail end of sexploitation, well into the porno era (the "hardcore" version of the film actually added a penetration scene, much to Andy Milligan's dismay). But its smutty softcore spirit personifies sexploitation. It should also be added that the description is a composite - from two incomplete versions of* Fleshpot *floating around plus the original script.]*

"Nothing reflects quicker than a movie on morals and mores and modern trends, manners, whatever," said Andy Milligan, and one can concoct an interesting sexual history of sixties America (and chart all sorts of incremental changes) from perusing the mountain of sexploitation pictures cranked out in that decade.

With the advent of the drive-in and small-sized "art theaters," postwar America was ripe for a new kind of cinematic thrill the majors wouldn't touch. Sleaze merchants stepped in to fill the gap, sometimes reaping great financial reward.

"There were two distinct marketplaces where the more-candid-than-mainstream movies could be profitably proffered, one for the select, sophisticated white-wine-and-canapes crowd, and the other, much larger one, for the less discriminating, cold-beer-and-greaseburger gang," stated exploitation legend David F. Friedman. "As diverse as the two audiences were, both were intent, oddly enough, on viewing pictures in which human

female epidermis was exposed ... snob and slob alike sought the naked truth in their filmfare."

In the forties and fifties, you had burlesque pictures - crude, static records of vaudeville shows that existed solely to showcase gyrating, isolated female flesh. Distributors also found they could buy some foreign "art" picture, which was invariably "sexier" than any American counterpart (perhaps spicing it up with some minuscule inserts featuring equally minuscule nudity), slap on a suggestive title, and make a pile of loot. Then there was that ultimate voyeuristic question mark, the "nudist" film, which featured more flesh (although genitals were strategically blocked from view) in such ridiculous (and pointedly nonsexual) settings as volleyball games. "Never have so many paid so much to see so little," wrote historians Turan and Zito. "Nothing ever happened."

The history of the true sexploitation picture begins right at the dawn of the sixties with the nudie-cutie. These "innocent little peep shows" were "as rigid in their plot construction as a morality play," said producer Friedman. "Adult theater customers obviously never tired of watching the voyeuristic lead character, generally a bumbling buffoon, leer at naked ladies." Russ Meyer's 1959 *The Immoral Mr. Teas* is credited as the first nudie-cutie. Shot in four days, with running time barely over an hour, this tale of a sad sack delivery man with the ability to see women naked eventually earned over a million dollars - not bad from a production that cost all of twenty-four grand.

Also in 1959, David Friedman produced Herschell Gordon Lewis's *The Adventures of Lucky Pierre*. Egged on by Rose LaRose - a former burlesque queen-turned-theater owner seeking sexier product - Friedman produced *Pierre* for the miserly sum of $7,138.46. It nearly earned back its cost via its Indianapolis opening at one theater alone. "Playing a sexer for the first time was like having the exclusive cold-drink concession on the main road in Hades," boasted Friedman. Scores of *Mr. Teas* imitations copied the formula throughout the next few years, and a sort of sexploitation gold rush began.

Throughout the early to mid-sixties came original low-budget productions whose storytelling and approach aped conventional movies but with

increasing sexual content - people actually began pawing each other, however unconvincingly. Tumultuous cultural shifts of the late sixties - aided by landmark obscenity rulings - begat that squishy mess called hardcore, and the jig was definitely up for sexploits of a softer sort. Hardcore showed the actual mechanics of sex - erections, penetrations, ejaculations. Sexploitation was for the most part simulation only. [*Of course, the two genres were often lumped together, as evidenced by a 1970* Life *cover story, "Pornography Goes Public," whose opening spread features a picture of a 42nd Street marquee advertising* The Filthy Five *and* The Promiscuous Sex*, both Andy Milligan sexploitationers that were far tamer then other movies prominent in the article, such as* I Am Curious (Yellow) *and* Sexual Freedom in Denmark.]

Exploitation film was always a con game - how to get the most dough out of an audience from the least effort possible - and sexploitation was art of a particular con. Largely black and white, with no budget, no stars, and usually far from anything remotely "erotic," they were strange, crummy pictures - bad gases emitted from the fevered minds of males poised on the scary ledge of sixties sexual freedom.

Sexual activity was badly mimed - usually consisting of long stretches of poorly executed camera panning showing a gal outfitted in bad underwear, flailing about on an unmade bed while some hairy-backed black-soxed lug lies on top pawing her while trying to keep his face hidden, all to the pulsating accompaniment of some ultra-cheapo hastily mixed stock music. There were all sorts of arcane restrictions. Female nudity was initially restricted to breasts and rear (the rule was "pubic hair equals pornography," said Friedman), male genitalia and male homosexuality were no-nos (although the latter would bubble up in nearly all of Andy Milligan's pictures). Lesbian activity was laughably presented, usually as a male spectator sport.

The only thing shocking about these pictures today is that they were ever considered shocking. "It was so tame by comparison, even by television standards," said film editor Kemper Peacock. And yet these films somehow remain unsavory. While hardcore pornography - especially in its early days - relegated itself to the machinations of actual sex, sexploitation had to fill

up its (hopefully) ninety minutes with some attempt at a story for its all-male audience, and - surprise, surprise - it was usually some sort of morality play that found a dame at the short end of the stick.

Don't get me wrong - I have a great fondness for many sexploitation pictures, but it's a box of chocolates laced with poison, often espousing viewpoints more noxious than those of hardcore porno. For all their makers' crowing about providing an outlet for pent-up sexual desires, these pictures exploited men's fear, ignorance, and hatred, employing archaic stereotypes that, in the sixties, seemed pushed to a fever pitch. "ALL WOMEN ARE BAD!" "THE RAPE - IT GOES ALL THE WAY!" "How Far Should a Mother Push Her Daughter? UNDERAGE!" "BAD GIRLS DO CRY!" "From Penthouse to Playgirl - She was a Lady but wanted to be treated like a Tramp - AGONY OF LOVE!"

The people who cranked this slop out were a rough-and-tumble bunch somewhat analogous to the indie record producers of the fifties. They had their dimestore product and had to compete not only with each other but with all-powerful major studios for playdates. It was a fly-by-the-seat-of your-pants business, with opportunities for thievery at every step. In order to play a picture around the country, distributors turned to subdistributors who handled specific territories for maybe 25 percent of the gross. Some sub distributors owned their own theaters, allowing them to play the film on the sly and keep the dough. Theater employees, usually working for miserable wages, stole from the till.

Exhibitors were liable to screw you at every turn, and if they didn't think you had any future product to offer, they'd stiff you and play your picture to death without paying. Sometimes prints were copied by bootleggers. "A tough business," said distributor Lee Hessell.

But operating in the shadows with disreputable product made for strong ties. "There was a nucleus of people you worked with, and that was it," said Kemper Peacock. "It was such a small industry - there was almost this Mafia code that ran through it. An element of loyalty."

Not that anybody freely gave competitors a helping hand. People fought to get their pictures into the limited number of theaters seedy enough to run the stuff. And since, as Joseph Brenner stated, "everybody is envious of the next guy in the motion picture industry," distributors and producers constantly bullshitted *Variety* when it came to grosses, inflating figures by absurd amounts to attract more business. "We had a problem with *Sexual Practices*," said distributor Lew Mishkin. "It opened at the World Theatre and did double what anything else had done. The problem was, they normally doubled grosses, so if we doubled them again they looked absolutely preposterous. We really couldn't show how well the film did."

Outside of the occasional regional oddball, sexploitation pictures originated mainly in New York and Los Angeles, resulting in product as different as the Velvet Underground was from the Beach Boys, Scorsese from Spielberg. Typified by the work of Russ Meyer and (post-1963) David Friedman, Hollywood sexploitation tended to have better production values and prettier women and seemed more innocent (if that's possible) than its East Coast counterpart. New York sleaze was gritty, low-down, inherently kinkier - and the women often looked considerably more shopworn and real. A few bruises, some cellulite, and a hairy mole or two seemed prerequisite for sexploitation stardom in the Big Apple.

Some real New York characters churned out this stuff, and while Andy Milligan was definitely the odd fish out, it's worth getting a sense of the dirty pond he swam in. The mysterious Joe Sarno, a former fighter pilot who dressed all in black, directed such titillation as *Sin in the Suburbs* and *Meeting on 69th Street*. Barry Mahon - Errol Flynn's former manager – operated out of 630 Ninth Avenue assembling bombastic fare like *Banned* and *Censored* when not doing cardboard thrillers like *Rocket Attack* or even a kiddie picture or two. Mahon was prolific and likened making sexploitationers to "cranking out Ford cars." "Barry's films were not that good," said Joe Sarno, "but he made the best trailers."

Distributor Lee Hessell ran Cambist Films - "I was a shylock, a money lender. Cambistro is money exchanging" - which unleashed *The Minx, The Female*, and *The Pink Pussy - Where Sin Lives*. Joseph Brenner had *Freudis Sexualis* and *The Lonely Sex* and, in 1969, distributed - once the director

agreed to shoot some raunchy inserts overseas - Martin Scorsese's first feature, *Who's That Knocking at My Door?*

At the top of the heap in terms of "class" were the velour sex epics from Audubon Films director / distributor Radley Metzger, a handsome, scarf-wearing film buff whose budgets were ten times that of any other sexploitationer. Quintessential sixties Audubon hits like *Camille 2000, Therese and Isabel,* and *Carmen, Baby* were suffused with a slick Euro-naughtiness, and, usually under the pseudonym Henry Paris, Metzger later directed such steamy hardcore films as *The Punishment of Anne* and *Maraschino Cherry* - pictures that were frequently underlaced with a very personal sort of cruelty. Metzger's polished product had arthouse appeal and esoteric, provocative campaigns that enabled Ava Leighton - his blonde, tough-as-nails partner in Audubon as well as a former booker for Allied Artists and Janus Films - to slip them into legit theaters and rake in a fortune. Audubon's 1966 Copenhagen import *I, a Woman* was said to have eventually grossed four million - from an initial investment of $20,000.

"Radley made the classiest pornos, and Ava was a good saleswoman," said Lee Hessell, who, unbeknownst to Metzger, slipped Leighton a piece of his first few pictures in order to learn the distribution ropes himself. "She knew who stole, who you hadda check. She knew how to collect." [*David Friedman said the real bond between Hessell and Leighton was mink. "Lee Hessell was a furrier. And Ava Leighton was a fur freak. Lee used to sell Ava fur coats. She had a closet full."*] Leighton was highly respected in the nearly all-male exploitation biz. Stated David Friedman, "Ava wanted to prove one thing - that she could do anything any man could do. She proved it."

Located at 235 West 46th Street, American Film Distribution was run by Stanley Borden, a former jukebox jobber alleged to have some shady ties ("Stan was probably connected," said Friedman. "One of the sweetest guys you'd ever meet in your life") and who was rumored to own a share of such tiny "shoebox" end-of-42nd-Street theaters as the Mermaid, which specialized in raunchier fare, known as "kinkies" and "roughies." [*David F. Friedman claimed credit for producing the first "roughie" in 1963, H. G. Lewis's* Scum of the Earth*, an alleged "expose" of sexploitation filmmakers*

who "dwell and thrive in a morass of depravity." Friedman maintains that while others were shooting their sexploitationers in color, Scum *was intentionally shot in black and white "so that it would 'look dirty,' like an old, scratched 16mm stag film. It did."*

Although they occupy their own weird niche, Andy Milligan's sexploitation pictures are definitely linked to the roughies by way of their unrelenting emphasis on aberrant sexuality and violence, not to mention the inherent "look-dirty" production values. And the-wages-of-sin is-death subtext of so many Milligan films harkens back to the earliest days of exploitation.]

Borden distributed some of the absolute weirdest and grimmest sexploitation fare, much of it created - under the occult aliases Anna Riva and Julian Marsh - by an odd married couple, Roberta and Michael Findlay. Pictures like their 1967 *The Touch of Her Flesh* featured death by buzzsaw, crossbow, and poisoned rose. [*Some found the death of Mike Findlay - who also was responsible for one of exploitation's biggest cons,* Snuff*, a crappy South American potboiler that was (falsely, of course) peddled as the first murder-on-camera snuff film - rather ironic given his cinematic savagery. He was beheaded in a helicopter accident atop the Gulf and Western building on May 16, 1977. According to sound mixer Aaron Nathanson, at the time of his death Findlay was working on a picture concerning "a guy who fell in love with a chicken. Didn't turn out badly, actually."*]

Borden also made a bundle with the ultra-fetishistic *Olga* series, star ring the sublimely severe Audrey Campbell as a stern dominatrix who doled out bizarre punishments to her forever-bad girls.

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One lone wolf seemed to get the best out of 42nd Street: William Mishkin. His ability to earn huge grosses from meager product was legendary. It so infuriated the competition that at least one rival was driven to standing outside a theater showing Mishkin's latest sexploitationer, scribbling notes while scrutinizing the marquee, the campaign, and the stills, trying to figure out how William did it. It certainly wasn't the picture - everybody knew Bill's pictures were awful.

"It was in the campaigns," admitted Mishkin. "Like Hitchcock had a knack for pictures that had a certain something, I obviously had a knack for picking out titles and doing campaigns. I can't tell you how often other buyers would say to me, 'Hey, Mishkin, if only your pictures were as good as the ads, you'd be a millionaire!'"

Mishkin's campaigns were consistently lurid. They were what drew me to Andy Milligan's pictures in the first place. The slogans were so outrageous, the artwork so cheap, the layout so rigorously banal. Audubon's campaigns were "classier," maybe kinkier, and American Film Distribution's were perhaps the most brutal and grimy, but Mishkin's were just ... the dirtiest. There was a mad restraint that hinted at total depravity. William had his finger on the pulse of something sweaty, What Men Really Wanted to See. And the fact that you never did, well, that was the dark heart of the exploitation biz: making something out of nothing. Because when it came down to it, Mishkin's films were notoriously tame.

"The best part of a William Mishkin picture was in front of the theater," said Lee Hessell, and what he is talking about is the Front. In the days before music video and cable TV, the street display was a real assault, featuring banners, one-sheets, and still blow-ups, all arranged in a garish but potent still life strategically designed to sucker customers off the street and into the theater. With the advent of video, boxed sidewalk monitors were added, blasting trailer cacophany into the street ad infinitum. King Displays made most of the fronts for 42nd Street - ranging in price from $150 to $700 - and William Mishkin was a master at them. "Our fronts cost twice as much as everybody else's," said son Lew.

When it came to campaigns, Mishkin controlled every twisted detail. "I knew what I wanted. You had to make it sexy, make it enticing - get people to want to see it, that's all. If you were selling an exploitation picture, the title and the way you advertise was three-quarters of the battle."

"Mishkin was the original high-concept guy," said former employee Straw Weisman. "I've got a picture - what's the picture called? *Cheerleader Hookers*. OK, now we know everything about the movie we need to know.

A title that tells everything - Mishkin was doing high-concept titles twenty years ago."

A dapper dresser with gray hair and a neat mustache, William Mishkin appeared to be the antithesis of his lurid campaigns. "I was expecting a monster," said producer Allen Bazzini. "Mishkin looked like Howard Hughes, Flo Ziegfeld. He reminded me of a Hollywood tycoon."

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"Before I ever got into the motion pix biz I was a movie buff," Mishkin told me. "I always had a flair." The youngest of six children and the only boy, William Paul Mishkin was dissuaded from an early interest in acting by his family. His father died when he was twelve. Mishkin worked advertising jobs, for a while studying law at Columbia by night. Eventually he somehow made a living selling "fancy boxes": containers for watches, perfume, and costume jewelry. He learned that the fancier the box, the more you could make from whatever was inside. In hindsight, he found the con not unlike the exploitation movie business.

When materials became scarce during the war, he started looking for a new career. "My wife said, 'You're sorry you didn't go into the movies. You know so much about movies - why don't you try it?'" At age thirty-nine he gave it a whirl and got hooked immediately. "Before I got into the film business I was successful at what I did - reasonably. And I was always glad when five o'clock came and I left. Once I got into the movie business, that never happened. I never cared how long it took."

Drawing on a small sum saved up from his previous endeavors, he sought out filmmakers looking for investors, but soon found they offered little and wanted a lot of money in return. Then he stumbled onto a deal to finance a jungle picture for a party with access to stock wildlife footage to pad the running time. A distributor had offered to put up half the $50,000 needed; Mishkin was to supply the rest.

When the price of his stake shot out of reach, Mishkin offered to work for the distributor for a month to learn something about the business. By the end of the month he knew enough to pass on the jungle movie, but decided

to stay on with the distributor - until he discovered he was being double-charged for trailers. Already he had learned his first lesson: people were not shy about cheating you in the movie business. "So I went out by myself. And the minute I did it was like magic. Everything I touched turned to gold."

Formed in 1949, William Mishkin Motion Pictures distributed racy foreign films and, more important, worthless out-of-date B pictures that Mishkin cannily repackaged. "These pictures were old enough to vote - all of them had played *a lot*. I changed the title, I changed the campaign – I only bought those pictures that had some smattering of sex. And they went." [*David Friedman was not a Mishkin fan. "His stuff was crap. Foreign imports with ugly broads - mustaches and hair under their arms. We called 'em the hairy armpit pictures. They never played anyplace but New York."*]

In 1953 came Mishkin's first original production, a tawdry little number called *Violated!* "The story was about a guy who was off the beam, a fetishist for hair. A photographer. He would lure these people up to the studio - and ultimately get his hair." Mishkin hired a writer of smutty sex paperbacks to author the script. "The campaign on *Violated!* was prepared before we made the picture. And what was in that poster had to be in the picture." When the writer was unable to crank out pages fast enough, Mishkin, who had done a little off-Broadway writing in the past, took over.

And when *Violated!* starlet Lili Dawn ("She looked like Hedy Lamarr, except that she was at least ten pounds heavier") suddenly wanted her salary quadrupled the night before they were to shoot a scene where the police question her about the killer, Mishkin, who'd played a bit role to fill out a nightclub scene, "rewrote her part and had them interrogate me." The cheapest route to the big screen possible: this was the Mishkin way.

The completed film was greeted with indifference. One reviewer reported that *Violated!* "blew into the World yesterday and it is hoped that the ill wind responsible feels properly ashamed." But Mishkin was on his way. While *Violated!* was "never a smash, it wasn't bad. Of course, you can't compare it to Andy's stuff. This was a real movie - you could hear all the sound."

Mishkin soon became a sexploitation king. "When you had a sex exploitation film, every film would include a key word in the title. And the key word might be *naked*, it might be *sex*. There were about a half-dozen key words - *sex, shame, sin, naked - The Sin of Nora Brandt*. Or *The Naked Town*." The title had to have the right amount of sex without offending censors. "You'd never say *The Naked Breast*."

But William set out to reinvent the wheel. "I was breaking my head. If I could only find a word that would suggest the picture was sexy without using one of the tired words that had been used over and over again. I came up with the word *orgy*."

Yet when he polled a few of his friends to find out what images orgy conjured up, he was disappointed - men in togas lounging about, women feeding them grapes. Historical hanky-panky was box-office doom. "Any kind of a costume picture never went with the sex audience. So I was thinking and thinking. Well, you could say, *The Orgy at* Lil's *Place* - it immediately brings it up to the present day."

Not that Mishkin shared his brilliant concept with anyone. "Willie was very paranoid," said Joe Brenner. "I used to meet him every so often and we'd talk about what we had coming up. I'd mention my titles, but he was secretive. He'd say, 'Well I'm working on a picture now, I think I've got a title for it.' I'd say, 'What is it, Willie?' 'Well ... I'm not set yet.'"

Even *Orgy*'s director, Jerald Intrator - working under the pseudonym J. Nehemiah - was kept at arm's length as he kept asking why one of the leads had to be named Lil. "Of *course* I didn't tell him what the title was," said Mishkin. "Somebody would've come out a month or two ahead of me with *The Orgy at* Madge's *Place*." Mishkin was so clandestine he didn't even have an assistant, figuring that if they were any good, "In a year I'm not gonna have an assistant, I'm gonna have a competitor. What do I need it for?"

Lil's campaign was Mishkin at his most unbridled, with nary a toga in sight. "THE CLEOPATRA OF THE INDEPENDENTLY PRODUCED PICTURES!" screamed *Lil*'s pressbook. Half-naked women dotted the

shocking one-sheet, with a pulsing, purplish "ORGY" dominating the text. "Everything went .... No holds barred! If you didn't go the limit you were considered a square! SEE Beautiful Girls Wrestling! SEE the Whipping Scene! SEE the 'Art' Class!"

The movie, of course, welched on every promise. "All sizzle, no steak," said Lee Hessell. The mostly black and white picture - a meager portion of the film was shot otherwise so Mishkin could advertise "Scenes in BLUSHING COLOR!" - was reportedly a tame affair, starring *Playboy* centerfold Carrie Knudsen as an artist's model who winds up at an orgy, exiting, according to the pressbook, "with her virginity intact, but with her dress, emotions, and hopes for the future torn to shreds."

"That picture was passed without one frame being lifted because of censorship," boasted Mishkin, who knew to the letter what you could get away with. "There's a scene in an art class, a man is posing. You see a full-length shot of him in the nude - a bare behind - this they permitted as long as it was a distant shot. There's a scene where a woman's dress is torn down to the waist - you see most of her bare back. And we drew some marks with lipstick looking as though she'd been beaten. Obviously you think you're gonna see a whipping scene in the picture, but you never do."

Orgy was so tame that, years later when the MPAA ratings system came in, Mishkin submitted it "and they said, 'If you make one cut - *one cut* - it'll get a G instead of a PG.' We didn't want a G!" Originally released in 1963, *Orgy* had a gangbusters campaign, and undoubtedly the fronts to match. It was a smash right out of the gate, Mishkin's all-time highest sexploitation grosser - reportedly over $300,000 from a $35,000 investment.

Even Johnny Carson helped boost box office with a few mentions in his late-night monologue. The title became so infamous that even in towns where it could be advertised only as *At Lil's Place* business was "almost as good, because people knew - it got around. That's when the word *orgy* became the word that it means today," said Mishkin proudly.

Unlike many of his competitors, Mishkin refused to waste time chasing after backwater bookings with low earnings potential. "Instead of going

looking for customers for playdates that would earn a hundred dollars, I would concentrate on the important playdates - where the front meant a great deal and you got the longest run."

That meant 42nd Street, where Mishkin's sexploitation hit big. One picture - Kemal Horolu's *All About Sex of All Nations* - enjoyed an astounding year-long run. "I played it with five shorts, a six-film total first time ever done on 42nd Street," Mishkin recalled.

His success drove his rivals crazy. "Several of my competitors at the time said, 'How come I go to the Rialto Theatre and I play for two or three weeks - but you play for four *months*?'"

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"New York City was a madhouse," said David Friedman. "The biggest mooches in the world." At the top of the mooch list were the Brandts. The Brandt Organization ran nearly all of the 42nd Street theaters and had tentacles throughout the motion picture industry. It was run by four brothers: Harry, William, Bernard, and Louis. All four were alleged millionaires and philanthropists - not to mention ballbusters when it came to a deal. And the fact you had a deal didn't mean you got paid. "They were notorious slow payers," said Friedman, who wound up taking less on his take just to get something. "A lot of people hated the Brandts," said Joe Sarno. "I mean *hated*. They drove such hard bargains."

When David Friedman brought Kroger Babb's birth-of-a-baby epic *Mom and Dad* to 42nd Street, he refused to give Harry Brandt a cut from the lucrative "educational" books hawked at intermission by the lecturer. Even though the picture made the Brandts a pile of loot in admissions and concessions, they were in an absolute frenzy over the book sales. "Brandt and his booker Joe Ingber were in that theater every *hour* asking how many books were selling. It drove Brandt crazy, absolutely drove Brandt crazy. He was so greedy - he was makin' more money than he ever had, but he just couldn't stand to see anybody else making money."

Harry and William Brandt went into business in 1910 with a hand cranked projector, showing movies on a sheet at Coney Island. From this humble

beginning evolved a 150-house chain. During the Depression they began seizing a bunch of failing legitimate theaters on 42nd Street, turning them into a motion-picture mecca that ran by its own rules. [*According to Friedman, Harry Brandt really consolidated his power on 42nd Street as a result of Mayor Fiorello La Guardia's 1937 crackdown on Times Square burlesque theaters, which La Guardia dubbed "incorporated filth." "He was incensed with burlesque - he had a licensing commissioner named Moss, and Moss came up with some phony laws to get burlesque run outta town. The guy who was Moss's big contributor was Brandt. Harry Brandt wanted all those theaters for movie theaters. So when Moss was successful in denying licenses to burlesque, the burlesque theaters all moved over to Union City, New Jersey - leaving the strip wide open for Brandt."*]

"You could play a picture there and without advertising gross $25,000 - 30,000 - and many of the Broadway houses were lucky to do $8,000 - 9,000," said distributor Sam Sherman. "It was just one of those odd things. 42nd Street and its theaters were unique in the world."

Sherman recalled going to sell the Brandts a picture, entering past door men in natty uniforms. "They still thought it was 1928." Sherman rode the tiny two-man elevator, readying his pitch for booker Lou Wolff. "Going to his office was like going to see God - he'd say, 'Well, what have you got?' You'd bring him some slimy double bill and he'd look at you like you were dirt." Wolff, along with Joe Ingber, booked theaters for Harry Brandt, and both of them, according to David Friedman, "were thieves of the first order. They took money from everyone in the world! They had no compunctions about stealing money - if you wanted to play the Brandt circuit, you had to pay these two bastards off." Payoffs and shoddy deals were the name of the game on the Deuce.

Located smack dab in the center of midtown Manhattan, adjacent to the city's central bus depot, the Port Authority, and right above major subway arteries, the Deuce was blessed with almost limitless pedestrian traffic. There were double, triple, and quadruple bills, and the low admissions brought in a predominantly male crosscultural crowd that made for an audience like no other. Theaters stayed open to the wee, wee hours on weekends.

Prices reflected the changing shifts of city workers. "8 A.M. to noon, $1.25, noon to five, $2.50, five 'til closing, $5.00," recited theater manager Phil Todaro from memory. David Friedman claimed that every box office had eight sets of different-priced tickets, and if the Brandts smelled a hit, up went admission. If a picture stiffed, they'd yank it in the middle of the day. "They had these guys from Brinks walkin' up and down the street with a pushcart, pickin' up the money every hour! Oh, that was a great, great operation."

Marty Levine - a son-in-law to William Brandt ("it was all so incestuous," said Friedman), who joined the organization in 1928 - had the Forty Second Street Company, which ran the Apollo, Empire, Liberty, Lyric, Selwyn, Times Square, Victory, and Rialto. Mark Finklestein and booker Lou Fischler of Cinema Circuit Corporation ran the New Amsterdam, Harris, and Anco. Each theater had its niche. The Apollo was famous for foreign films, the Victory for science fiction, the Rialto for horror. The Lyric was the most desirable on the block, with "the grossing capacity of $100,000 – 150,000," recalled distributor Terry Levene. "1,145 seats. It would open at nine and close at 4:15 A.M. - to scrub it down and get the dead bodies out."

Located right at the prime intersection of 42nd and Broadway, the Rialto was the first theater you ran into from Times Square, and, while long known for horror, in the sixties the Rialto specialized in sexploitation fare. And it was run by a rascal named Bingo Brandt.

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Bernard "Bingo" Brandt was the black sheep of the Brandt family. Associates say he was embarrassed by the raunchier nature of the Rialto's fare - as was the rest of his family. "There was clearly a dichotomy there," said Terry Levene. "The names were the same, the families were the same, but Bingo primarily played sexually oriented material." In terms of the Brandts, "Bingo was like the last rung," said Joseph Brenner. (The lure of smut money would prove irresistible, though - Harry Brandt's Victory Theatre joined the Rialto in sexploitation fare and eventually went hardcore.)

Short, bald, and perpetually tanned, "Bingo" Brandt had an office above the Rialto that he shared with his largely unseen brother Louis, who looked after their real estate holdings. Bingo was popular with the ladies, often jetting off to Palm Springs, and was "always on the phone making a deal," said sometime distributor - producer Allen Bazzini.

Competition to play the Rialto was fierce, and "the deals varied depending on how bad Bingo wanted the picture," said Lee Hessell. "He had a waiting list to get in - Brenner, Mishkin, and I gave him most of his pictures. You had to fight for it." Cash payoffs for playdates was a frequent expense. A typical deal for independents was fifty percent above "the house nut."

The house nut was whatever it cost to run a theater for a week. Distributors expected theater owners to pad their expenses somewhat, but Bingo's nut was one of the nuttiest. Mishkin, who had sold pictures to the Rialto right before Bingo took it over, recalls the nut being $2,800. When Brandt took it over, it doubled - and that was only the beginning. "Every time you'd make a lot of money, they'd raise the house nut," said Joseph Brenner. "He got greedy."

In addition, as part of the deal for the Rialto, you'd have to second-run his fringe 42nd Street theaters, the Pix and the Bryant, for no percentage, just flat rentals. [*I believe the Globe - on Broadway between 42nd and 43rd - was also one of Bingo's flat rental houses. It played a lot of Milligan product*.] "Bingo demanded you pay homage to him, help him out 'I'm in trouble with the theater.' He was in trouble with the theaters for two hundred years."

Strangely enough, Brandt sometimes turned a blind eye to thieving employees. Mishkin once hired a checker to watch the box office and found the manager was staying open an extra hour at night and pocketing the proceeds. "First time it happened, I reported it to Bingo. He said, 'I know. What can you do?' I was very much taken aback. If he felt they were taking too much, then he let them go."

If you were green and wandered into Bingo's lair, you were lucky to escape alive. "He used to take a young filmmaker who opened up his pocketbook,

spent a lot of money on his first film trying to make a reputation for himself, and *fuck* him," said Joe Brenner. "That's not a man. That's an animal."

Particularly galling was the fact that Brandt was already extraordinarily wealthy from his family's holdings and still insisted on chiseling you. As William Mishkin recalled, "Bingo used to say, 'I'm making a millionaire out of you,' and I said, 'Don't forget - for every dollar that I make, you're making two.'"

"Nobody had a good relationship with Bingo, though my father had the best relationship of the distributors - based on the fact my father's films made more money than anybody else's," said Mishkin's son Lew. "Bingo was out for Bingo, and my father was the most successful vehicle he had to make a buck. It's as simple as that."

Whatever deal you made with Bingo, you knew it would later change, and not to your benefit. "He'd blame everything on his brother, who had nothing to do with it," said William Mishkin. "He'd say, 'I know I made a deal, but I can't help it - I have to go back to the other deal because my brother said I have no right to do it.' This, after the deal that was written was much better for me. His brother didn't *know* about it. He was an equal partner, I'm sure, but his brother never said boo to him.

"I had to pretend to believe him. I didn't say, 'You're a goddamn liar, you're just making it up.' You had to play with him. I took the attitude of, 'Well, you're really in the wrong, but I'll let you get away with it,' making light of it, while others probably just had a real fight and never gave in. But for every penny I lost because I gave in on a few things - not that many, believe me - I made five or ten."

"Will took a lot of crap with Bingo, which I would not do," said Joe Brenner, who grew livid recalling how Brandt bamboozled him by changing contracts as he was recovering from an emergency operation. "Here I was in the hospital, just over an operation, life or death, and he's trying to cheat on the deal." Brenner, who had always sent Bingo's wife roses for the holidays, now stopped. The next time he ran into Brandt at a screening, Bingo,

smirking, commented on how his wife had received no flowers that year. "I said, 'Bingo, the only roses you're gonna get from me are not happy roses.'"

Things were never the same between Brenner and Brandt after the clash and most felt Brandt wasn't the one who suffered. "It didn't pay to bite the hand that fed you," said Lee Hessell. "Waddaya gonna do, fight with him? Bingo was the only game in town."

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In truth, there were a few non-Bingo options. Marty Levine would occasionally take an exploitation picture, but "he was a pain in the ass," said Lee Hessell. "He'd cut a worse deal than Bingo would. He was second-run. You'd play Bingo, run three to six months, whatever length of time you could, then six or eight months later you'd come around the corner and play a double bill."

Down a few blocks from 42nd Street on Eighth Avenue was the tawdry empire of Chellee Wilson, which centered around the Cameo (formerly the Squire). Legend has it Wilson arrived from Greece with only her daughter and a couple of reels of an old Greek-language picture. Teaming up with an effeminate projectionist named Rex whom she somewhat inexplicably married (Wilson "flew both ways," as Friedman put it), before long Chellee established a cross-country circuit of theaters that catered to Greek immigrants.

She somehow fell into the sexploitation business, then later unleashed upon Times Square a gaggle of the most perverse hardcore theaters ever, not to mention the first all-male porno theater, the Eros (and its hetero twin, the Venus, originally the Eros II). By the end of her life, Wilson was said to have amassed a fortune in real estate holdings.

A brown-suited fireplug with a mouth like a sailor, Chellee held court in her restaurant, the Mykonos on 46th Street, or her smoke-filled offices at 346 West 44th. "Chellee, she was an absolute character," said Joe Sarno. "One of the toughest women I have ever met."

David Friedman used to engage in heated poker games with Wilson, and when the coffee-chugging cigar-chomping dame was down a few grand, she'd bark in garbled English, "Bring me some money, you sum of a bitch!" at one of her minions, usually some Greek immigrant hot dog vendor Chellee had sponsored in exchange for 70 percent of his pushcart take. "They'd bring money up in paper sacks," recalled a bemused Friedman. [*Wilson is the obvious inspiration behind Mrs. Huxton, the shadowy porno theater matriarch in Bruce Benderson 1994 Times Square novel* User.]

Wilson - who also produced her own sexploitation - was not known for her generosity. "Chellee told you what the deal was gonna be," said editor Kemper Peacock. "You didn't negotiate with Chellee." The deal was usually a meager flat rental instead of any sort of percentage. "First run, $1,500, two weeks. With Bingo, I could take $8,000-10,000 out in film rental the first week," said Lee Hessell. "I made more money on 42nd Street. By the time it got to Chellee it wasn't worth anything."

But some got better deals than others. Friedman made "big money" playing his sexploitation first-run at the Tivoli, a "dynamite house" at 50th Street and 8th Avenue run by Wilson and Armenian Gil Atamian. The Tivoli ran sexploitation all week, save for Sunday, when it transformed into a Greek language theater for immigrants who flooded in after service at an orthodox church around the corner. "It was a funny deal," said Friedman. "In six days at the Tivoli, a soft 'X' would gross $25,000 - 30,000, and on Sunday the theater would gross between five and eight thousand on the *Greek* pictures."

Perhaps the most coveted playdate of all was the World Theatre at 49th and 7th Avenue. Owned by Jean Goldwurm and run by his nephew Felix Bilgrey, both of whom had fled Europe during the war, it was the one class act in the sexploitation netherworld. Bilgrey, who as a lawyer had taken an obscenity case over import *The Game of Love* to the Supreme Court in 1957 and won, was known for his fair deals, but few got them. "He had contracts with pictures two years in advance," said Lee Hessell. "He had integrity." [*Friedman was a little less complimentary. "Bilgrey was another little mooch. He was weird. Oh boy, was he weird." Bilgrey's wife suffered from depression and he wanted Friedman to supply a cure. "He talked like Peter Lorre - 'Maybe you could put her in vun of your pictures, in black*

undervear. This might bring her out of her moods.' He wanted me to put his wife in sex pictures!"]

"The World gave me a wedge against Bingo," added Hessell, who could often nail down a 42nd Street booking fast by threatening to take the picture to Bilgrey if Bingo didn't make space for him. "He knew the picture would make money, so he'd bump some other poor guy to get my picture." Bilgrey was not the type to bump pictures for fast cash, and the World's one big drawback was that only a few pictures played there a year. "It was better than Bingo's," said Hessell. "Unfortunately I had too many pictures - I couldn't play them all at the World, so I had to deal with Bingo. I'd say, 'I coulda got more from the World.' And he'd say, 'Yeah, and you'd wait two years.'"

One person in particular had the World sewn up - William Mishkin and nobody could figure out how he scored it. All these decades later David Friedman was still fuming over the deal Mishkin had. At one point Friedman, along with director / running buddy Bob Cresse, were determined to squeeze playdates out of Bilgrey. Armed with 16mm prints of their latest pictures, boatloads of lobster, buckets of scotch, not to mention a bevy of broads, they set up a suite at the Waldorf with the sole purpose of wooing Bilgray into delivering playdates at the World.

"Bilgrey walks in and he sees three sun-kissed blonde blue-eyed Teutonic girls - good-looking chicks, California asses, something those New York Jewish boys had never saw or even dreamed about. 'Hello, Mr. Bilgrey, may I take your coat?' His greedy little eyes pop out of his head.

"After he's eaten - the girls are on both sides of him, rubbing him down, giving him everything – I start the projector and Cresse and I leave. And we leave the girls with him. He's lying on a big ottoman with the girls, they're all watching the pictures. The only thing I do is come in to change the reel. By now the son of a bitch is down to his underwear. So we run both pictures. I guess he gets home about four in the morning. He's totally drained."

Friedman and Cresse ran to see Bilgrey the following day, certain their bacchanalian offerings had earned them a deal. "I say, 'Felix, how'd ya like the pictures?' 'Ach, they were both marvelous! Just marvelous!' I said, 'Good, when can you play 'em? 'Well, you don't understand - you see, Bill Mishkin has a sequence....'"

Having just spent five grand entertaining Bilgrey, Friedman hit the roof. "I said, 'What is this *sequence*??? How much do you want *in cash*???' We never got the fuckin' pictures played. I could never figure it out. Mishkin must've been givin' him a blow job or somethin'. We could not get into that theater. Mishkin had a deal with Bilgrey for the World Theatre that *nobody* else could get."

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"The so-called freedom of the screen was purely a result of the battle of the independents," stated David Friedman. "The majors should've kissed the independents' asses. Because the independents are the ones that fought the censorship battles." Friedman recalls a time in the late sixties when the governor of Alabama shut down seven theaters playing "X" pictures. United Artists' much ballyhooed *Midnight Cowboy* was one of those shut down, alongside three houses that were playing Friedman's sexploitation fare. He got the charges dropped. "United Artists never even showed," he said. "The majors never took *any* stand in the fight against censorship."

In the early days of sexploitation, 42nd Street, for all its sinful reputation, fell under the jurisdiction of the New York State Board of Regents, the state's incredibly tough censorship authority. [*Exploitationers had to deal not only with idiosyncratic state-to-state regulations but also with the Catholic Church's all-powerful Legion of Decency, which issued moral-content ratings. Exhibitors were loathe to touch a picture branded "C" for "condemned." But even these zealots could be thwarted. In his book* A Youth in Babylon*, David Friedman recounts how the 1956 fig-leaf epic* Adam and Eve *successfully avoided condemnation by peddling itself as a Bible story. "What we had was a bare-assed Miss Universe with no beefs from the God squad," wrote Friedman. "It was like having a license to sell dope."*

Friedman felt that - due to its connection to the educational system - the New York censor board was far more civilized than most of its counterparts. "It wasn't like Chicago, where the five widows of aldermen - all Irish Catholic - were the censor board. At least Dr. Peche was an educated man."]

Filmmakers would haul their picture down to an office in the Municipal Building, where it would be screened for a group of censors led by Dr. Louis Peche. If the film passed, the producers were charged a small fee per reel and a seal of approval would be tagged to the end of the film. If any material was deemed objectionable, you were told to cut it if you wanted to play the film in New York. "They were very strict - for instance, on a strip movie, a girl could not even remove a bra, even if she had pasties underneath," said William Mishkin, who had a reputation for being able to please the censor board.

Russ Meyer bitched to Mishkin that he couldn't get his 1959 voyeur classic *The Immoral Mr. Teas* - a smash hit in the rest of the country - into New York. "Meyer submitted it three times - they always turned it down," recalled Mishkin. "So I said, 'If I can get it passed, will you give me fifty per cent instead of the usual twenty-five?'" Meyer gladly agreed. Mishkin took *Teas* - basically an unending procession of semiclad women being ogled by the lead - and cut down the nudity by lengthening the shots of Mr. Teas staring. Much to Meyer's surprise, *Teas* passed. "The film was down to forty-seven minutes," said Mishkin. "Of course, it was not the picture it was once. It still did all right."

Not everyone kowtowed to the censor board. Lee Hessell claimed he'd slip smut shots back once the board passed a film. And unlike Mishkin he welcomed obscenity arrests. When an import Hessell was distributing, *Danielle by Night*, got into trouble in Connecticut, Hessell felt it was worth the few grand in legal fees to defend it, as the gross subsequently jumped from $3,500 to $40,000."I used to make a lot of money out of getting busted. Everybody would say, 'Gee, we gotta see this picture.' It was great publicity. I was tryin' to figure out a way to bust my own pictures!" [*Hessell purported to be equally gleeful when South American bombshell Isabel Sarli sued him for hiring a double and inserting nude inserts in her film* The

Female. *"I hired a PR guy. The picture doubled its business." Sarli capitalized on the success by appearing in much hotter pictures. "The suit was thrown out. By the time it came to court, she was fucking a horse in the Rialto."*]

Unlike many of his counterparts, Mishkin accepted censorship. "Will was timid," said Hessell. "He didn't want to fight anybody. He was afraid of getting arrested." Mishkin also was afraid that once people could see everything, they'd lose interest in the pictures where you saw nothing. "I didn't wanna handle the stuff that was too rough," Mishkin said. "I knew that it would get *too* rough. And it did." But hardcore was still a few years away when Andy Milligan entered the picture.

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Andy Milligan would make eleven released sexploitation pictures, seven of them for William Mishkin alone. Homosexual, artistic, and unapologetic, he'd never buddy up with the mercenary cast of characters above, but his particular brand of morality fit right in on the Deuce. His sexual preferences were somehow "overlooked" by his business associates - at least to his face - but for once his misogyny was appreciated. Andy was preaching to the lowlife choir.

As a movie hound, Milligan was already more than familiar with 42nd Street. He also went there for quick sex, meeting more than a few partners in the darker recesses of the theaters. He gleefully told me how one well known Hollywood B-star serviced him in the Apollo bathroom, claiming that on another night he left for home with the male half of a famous married pop singing duo.

It was also at the Apollo that Andy saw *Mademoiselle*, a 1966 French film based on a story by Jean Genet, directed by Tony Richardson, and starring Jeanne Moreau. It had a profound effect on him. His blues eyes twinkled remembering it decades later.

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***MADEMOISELLE*. THE SICKEST THING YOU EVER SAW. Stuff like that impressed me.**

It's about a schoolteacher in a rural section of France. Very blue-collar, very masculine type of guy in the lead. And there's this schoolteacher played by Jeanne Moreau. She was very prim and proper and she picked on this kid all the time - always put him in a dunce cap, made him sit in the corner. And the kid used to come home and tell the father, this itinerant worker, "Oh, she's probably right."

The kid has this pet rabbit he loved, which he'd carry around in his jacket. She picks on the kid all the time, and there's this one really awful scene - he's so frustrated he smashes the bunny 's brains on a brick wall. And it wasn't a double. It was before the cruelty to animals thing.

Well, Jeanne Moreau had a crush on the father. And she had a closet full of gowns and shoes and she'd dress up at home. So she goes out after the father. He's in the field, sort of sleeping, catnapping after lunch.

And she dresses in this black dress. And she seduces him. He's got these big, dirty work boots. And she's like an animal hiding in the field. She creeps up on him more and more and finally he wakes up and she's licking his boots. Yeah ... y'know, she's like a masochist.

He stands up and turns away like he's getting a hard-on - it's very graphic, the whole film - and she runs behind a tree and starts whimpering like a little animal. And she gets down and all the grass is blowing, like weeds ... and she crawls through his shadow, and then, finally, she lies down and she's looking up at him. And you see him masturbating. On her face .... Aaaaaaaaah, it was a mindblower.

And after that she's all torn, full of weeds, and she walks back down the road and all the women come around - "What happened, what happened" - and she doesn't say a word. But they think that he raped her. And they stone him to death in the field.

In the next scene it's raining. The kid is crying in the doorway at the school. She comes out, she's got all her trunks packed and she's in a cab. And she rolls down the window and waves. And goes off to the next school, ahahaha. Powerful. Oh, gosh.

[*Also a favorite of John Waters,* Mademoiselle *is now available on video, and some of what Andy describes so vividly is implied, but not seen. Perhaps the 42nd Street version had smuttier material inserted.*]

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I went to all the foreign films. I had to. See, the Apollo Theatre was the only place you got to see foreign films. The Apollo was king. It was the art house. It was like a club. Every week the Apollo had a new double bill. You'd always see the same faces going in. You met - I hate to say - all the intellectuals. It was a notorious make-out place. The balcony and the john. Y'know - if you didn't go there for one, you went for the other.

Every friend or lover I've ever met is someone I've met in the worst places. The most interesting people in life are whores, the despicable whores. 'Cause they're the best people, darlin'.

All of 42nd Street was safe then. It just got creepier and creepier. My films played every house on the street but the Anco. All I did was grind out product. For survival, really.

7

SWIRL CAMERA

WRITING ABOUT THE EARLY FILMS of Andy Milligan is a particular challenge - most just don't exist as of 2001. Eight of his released sexploitation films are lost, and another four and a half films were unfinished or unreleased (three of these are missing as well).

Sometime in the seventies, William Mishkin's son Lew saw no further commercial potential in the films and, tired of paying storage fees, destroyed all known prints and negatives. "I had to beg Lew not to destroy *Orgy* [*at Lil's Place*]," said former associate Straw Weisman. "I don't think they ever truly saw their history. They were making business." Two of the films Milligan made for producer Jerry Balsam suffered a similar fate. And Andy - a whirling dervish who cared nothing for posterity - lost two pictures on his own. All that remain are the odd press book, poster, and a bunch of cockeyed stills shot by Andy himself. Some are offended by Milligan's off-kilter compositions; I think he had a great eye - a sort of 42nd Street expressionism.

Then there are the scripts - madly typed, scribbled affairs that offer only the dialogue plus skeletal direction, usually the all-purpose "Business" or "Camera Swirl," indicating Andy's preference for ending a crazed scene by panning the camera wildly. For the first seven sexploitation pictures, only two scripts exist.

Milligan's films were unique by any standards, and very different from other exploitation pictures. First and foremost there were the punishing budgets. Most of his sexploitation films hovered around the poverty level - $10,000 total cost. Then there was the 16mm Auricon camera, totally inappropriate for features. Its optical sound sync delay forced Milligan to stage everything in long, rehearsed sections, and even then the sound quality itself was marginal. "I'd listen to some of the films and I'd think, 'Oh man, this sounds like one of the earliest films in recorded history,'" recalled John Borske. "Movietone News had better sound."

To save money on raw stock, Milligan used short ends - snippets of garbage left over from big film rolls used on mainstream shoots - which would frequently run out in the middle of a take. On the Auricon, Milligan used reversal film, meaning the film he shot was developed as a positive, which was then used to create an internegative for the 35mm blowup. He screened the footage once to select his takes, then cut it together. Other filmmakers labor over each cut with the precision of a jeweler, taking frames out, putting them back in. Not Andy.

John Borske recalled Milligan hastily screening the dailies, ripping the slate footage off the head of his selected takes (often with his teeth), taping the shots to a wall without marking them, then slapping all the takes together - cursing Mishkin all the while. "It was an impossible way to edit," said Borske, shaking his head. "You could only see it once. We scratched up the film a lot. The confusion was unbelievable."

Filmmaker Simon Nuchtern was amazed watching Milligan in action on one of his double-system 35mm films. "The way he made films was classic 1910. He could cut a film in four days - he'd listen to the slates and cut it together, no workprint, nothing." There were no optical effects in Milligan's films, save for in-camera fade-ins and -outs done while shooting.

The sound mixing was equally crude. Many filmmakers can't get enough tracks. Andy used only two - for everything. He used the same stock music ad nauseum, sometimes combining two pieces of music at once for crazy effect. His favorite exterior sound effect was a barking dog - Andy himself. At times you can hear him muttering directions on the tracks. Once recognized, Milligan's occasional but inevitable aural presence becomes a sublime part of the experience, not unlike "Mama" Mary Lee's audible lyric promptings to husband Jimmy Reed on his drunken, delirious r&b hits of the fifties.

Milligan scavenged everything, cannibalizing props and costumes from film to film. Hal Borske spoke of "the famous Andy roses - look at any Andy Milligan film and you're gonna see those fuckin' roses, guaranteed."

It was Milligan's vision in every frame. "Andy worked literally twenty four hours a day," said Hal. "We would help with the lights, the sound, but honestly, Andy did it all," said Hal's brother John.

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Milligan's frenetic feature output began in 1967 with *The Promiscuous Sex* "An Underground Treatment of a Fully Plotted Film! A Scathing Film of a Girl Without Morals!" Outside of a press book and a few stills, little remains. Actress Kay Carney, who remembered Andy as "a frenetic little squirrel," recalled a sadism scene with Cino actress Jacqui Colton. "She had made her pimp a cup of coffee and it was real hot, steaming. And she bends down you assume she's sucking him off. He says, 'Look up at me' and he spills the coffee right in her boobs."

Promiscuous featured a soon-to-be familiar theme in Andyworld: a woman goes astray, then repents - but too late, for the wages of sin is death. "In almost all of Andy's films, sexuality's a no-no," said the late playwright Donald Kvares. "If you indulge in illicit sex, you will be punished. It's that Irish middle-class puritanism."

Mishkin claimed that *The Promiscuous Sex* was technically the worst picture Andy ever gave him due to its nearly inaudible optical soundtrack. Mishkin, of course, concentrated on the campaign, whose main image was a shot of a moist-looking Matt Baylor licking some female's neck. "*The Promiscuous Sex* was the title - I just didn't make very much of 'The,' so it sounded like 'Promiscuous Sex,'" said Mishkin. "But nobody really objected."

Perhaps a few customers did. A friend of Carney's laughed as he recounted seeing it on the big screen. "All the old dudes who came to the World could find nothing to jerk off to."

"All Andy's pictures had a certain vitality to them, but technically they were ... bad," admitted William Mishkin."If only the photography was better, the sound was better - but then he couldn't have made them as cheaply as he did. They all still had a certain raw quality that I always thought was very special. And very real. Some people agreed with me. Most others did not."

Mishkin seemed curious about Milligan's life, but not that curious. "Andy was not exactly the guy next door. What the guy next door might do, Andy probably ... wouldn't."

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***PROMISCOUS* WAS SHOT over about five or six months on weekends. Richard Mangoode was the lead in that, very nice kid. Judith Rentzer was the girl lead - she was a little on the Method side. I think I got 'em both from an open call.**

Henry Ansel was in that. He lived above Mother Hubbard's in Sheridan Square. Mother Hubbard's was the hangout for all the artists, run by this Southern gal that used to keep these guys - Clara, wore a wig. Really bizarre. Henry was a fabulous painter, painted china. Henry took an overdose and he had three or four cats. A week later they found him - eaten up by his cats. The kid was only twenty.

***Promiscuous* was called *Liz* originally. *Liz* was a study of a girl who couldn't survive on modeling alone - she wasn't that pretty - and starts hustling on the side. Exploitation subject, but it was a human study. After *Liz*, they were all exploitation films, but *Liz* was not. It was a beautiful picture. Very artsy fartsy, very French - cigarettes glowing in the dark.**

So we put *Liz* together, then I had a screening. Donald Goldman's Theater of the Players. I called about eighteen distributors and maybe six showed up. And one of them was Mishkin.

No one knew what to do with a 16mm black and white film - y'know, it was a cinema verite type of film. So nothing happened. But Bill Mishkin said, "Well, Andy, if you want to put a couple of nude shots in it I might be interested. Maybe. Give me a call if nothing happens." [*Milligan did a wicked impression of Mishkin that was slow, deliberate, and very whiny.*]

So nothing happened and I gave him a call. He said, "Well, if you put in some backstage shots - a few breast shots - we can do something." So I

got some girls to come in and did the extension scenes. Just nude flashes. Backstage model scenes. They take their lashes off and stick 'em on the mirror. And that was it. Did I hate doing the inserts? I did it. You see, that is what it comes down to - it's not that difficult for artists to compromise commercially in a way. You have to be commercial to be discovered.

***Promiscuous* was made for $9,500 - including the blowup. The film was blown up to 35mm with a liquid gate process at B & O opticals. I was their first. It got a very good review when it first came out. Archer Winsten, the *Post*.** [*A search through the* New York Post *archives of 1967 revealed no review of* The Promiscuous Sex. *It's possible that Winsten saw it in its original incarnation as* Liz *and wrote about it in his weekly column, "Reviewing Stand."*]

Beginning of cinema verite stuff, they hadn't seen any of that - the documentary grain quality fascinated quite a few critics at the time. Warhol and I were neck and neck in that sort of thing, Cassavetes....

And the film opened at the World Theatre and ran twenty-seven weeks. I owned fifty percent, then it was knocked down to twenty-five percent. I never saw any accounting for it. And months later Mishkin says, "Well, I can buy you out. If you wanna make another film ..." That's when we did *Naked Temptress*, or *Naked Witch*.

We shot down in Manasquan, New Jersey. Some guy who played the hunchback, his parents owned the house. Terrible actor, but he could do a deaf mute. He played the lead and we got Manasquan. We shot in about seven days, shot all week. We stayed in two beach houses, had one hell of a time.

Poor Beth Porter was in bruises when Maggie Rogers took after her with the belt. Beat the shit out of her. Later we showed her giving birth on the beach - to this chicken. It really looked like a baby. We ate it that night.

In the middle of a blizzard, we had to do this scene. We brought out all these character women, all in these black flannel outfits, all different

designs - Victorian period. I like period stuff, like 1895. I made the costumes. Didn't have zippers even, they were safety pinned into 'em.

They stone the deaf mute on the beach and bury him in the sand with this big cross. And there's this huge snowstorm going on and their clothes are blowing - we were all wet - and you see all these women forever running to the beach to kill this witch. At the end, Bryarly Lee's there and she's laughing and we did a whole thing running around her 360 degrees.

Quite a movie, *Naked Witch*. Very black and white, very European, like *Bicycle Thief*, or *Open City*. Every artist learns from another artist. Good thing about black and white - you can really have some dark corners.

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"Clothes Cramped the Style of the Naked Witch! Brutality! Violence! Madness! She Made Fanny Hill Seem as Innocent as Mary Poppins!"

Released in 1967, *The Naked Witch*, a.k.a. *The Naked Temptress*, was Milligan's first horror period piece. It concerns the curse of a woman who was burned at the stake for partaking in orgies. Her daughter Beth - raised by Mary, the dead woman's sister - is similarly scorned.

Beth has an affair with Steven but they are afraid to tell anyone because of her background. She gets pregnant and, while Steven is at sea, gives birth to the stillborn baby at the house of the Dumb One, a hunchback ridiculed by the townspeople but befriended by Beth. Steven dies in an accident at sea. The despondent Beth confides in Bella, who is jealous of Beth and betrays her at every turn. Bella participates in an orgy with three men in town in exchange for their promise to rape Beth. Bella then spreads gossip that Beth is the loose woman.

The women in town turn on Beth, tying her up, putting her in a sack, and pummeling her. The Dumb One frees her, taking the beating in her place. Beth flees town. Mary then confides in Bella that Beth and Bella were twins - only Beth was thought to inherit the witch's curse. Bella smiles.

Starring in *Naked Witch* are Gerry Jacuzzo, Maggie Rogers, Hal Borske, Bryarly Lee, Robert Burgos, Joe Bush - a tempermental playwright who would pen two screenplays for Andy [*Josef Bush, a.k.a. Joe Busch, was a bisexual playwright who looked "something like a young Victor Mature - without those gigantic tits," said Hal Borske. Under the pen name Angelo D'Arcangelo, Bush wrote* The Homosexual Handbook *in 1967, an Olympia Press sensation that was the first to "out" J. Edgar Hoover via the usual rumors (the material was dropped in subsequent printings). Bush also had a racy hit off-Broadway play* - DeSade Illustrated - *until one night, after a row with the producers, he broke into the theater and destroyed the set and costumes. "Joe became poison," said Borske. MIA for years, in the eighties Bush showed up at Milligan's California doorstep. "Evidently he had AIDS and was doing a grand exit," said Borske. "He was wanted in a few states, notably Texas, for stealing cars and money and God knows what." Milligan hid him from the law and put him up in a trailer until he trashed the place and vanished. He is presumed dead.*] - and a voluptuous brunette by the name of Beth Porter, who had "the biggest tits in the world and braids that went to her waist," as Burgos recalled. In an attempt to be discreet about the nudity, Milligan "taped her braids to her nipples." During production, Porter became overly friendly with Joe Bush, unaware that he was romantically involved with Hal Borske. According to Borske, the beleaguered Bush finally laid it out for Porter, telling her, "Listen, Beth, stop shovin' your tits in my face. Noodles and I are a dance team."

Borske recalled Manasquan as full of "hardcore townie types" who would have been less than thrilled to find out a smutty movie was being filmed there. Milligan charmed the lot of them by claiming he was shooting a documentary. "He really talked their tits off. He convinced the mayor to do a scene with Beth Porter. There was no film in the camera!"

Those who saw the picture claim it was Milligan's most visually arresting. Adding to the stark quality was the fact that it was shot in the middle of a bitter snow and rain storm, which made the coastal location look all the more foreign and remote. And although the script was cowritten by a pal from the dress-designing days, Clay Guss, the Milligan archetypes are

already in place - diabolical women, innocent cripples, and twisted families, all headed for an unhappy end.

"Andy Milligan was like an American Bunuel," said Donald Kvares, the only person I know who actually saw most if not all of Andy Milligan's pictures during their original 42nd Street runs. "The dark things that are never really spoken of invade every minute, every frame of every film that Andy made. They have this dark funky power - the gutter and blood and the stink of hell, but at the same time a kind of sadness or poignancy. ... There's this feeling of decadence, of people moving around in the darkness of their own minds and not being able to come to grips with the world."

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EVERY FILM IS A DIFFERENT STYLE. It might have the stamp of a Milligan film, but each film has its own vitality, its own life.

I think all artists are part vampire, really. You have to be. You cannot re-create, you must procreate. You gotta prune all the time, pull up roots, start new growth. After Picasso and Miro got to a certain point, they stayed that way. At the height of your art you're paid big money for it. That's what they pay for and that's how artists die. A fly in amber. The artist that tries new things isn't the one who sells the best.

Clay Guss and I wrote *Promiscuous* and *Naked Witch*. I don't like other people's scripts that much because they don't understand low budget. That's the hard part - you have to compromise on the script. Course, if you write it yourself you know what you can do and what you can't. The compromise doesn't show as much.

Clay was never available after the first films. So I started writing. I said, "Fuck this shit. I can't wait for a typist, I can't wait for a writer." Neccessity, the mother of invention.

I sit down and write a road map. Just the premise. I know the beginning, the title, and the end. I get an ending and I work backward. That's it. Then it goes its own way. Out in left field. Later on, you read it and you don't recognize half the dialogue - "I wrote that?" If you

really let an artistic thing create, it takes its own course. If you force it, if you labor over it, it doesn't have a heart. The heart is fake. I've never labored over anything in my life. An artist, once they know it's gonna work, the rest is sheer labor.

You take from other things, ideas you've read. Everything's up there in your head - it's like a closet up there - and it all comes out when you're writing. I call it a cerebral bowel movement. Each fingertip's an asshole.

You can't be a writer unless you go naked on paper. There's *no way*. Show all the scars. You can't be a writer and protect your image. You've gotta let yourself bleed. You have to pick the emotional scar tissue. After a while you run out of blood.

I can turn scripts out in three days to a few weeks. Three days if you burn the midnight oil and somebody's standing over you with a check. I'm not a narrative writer. It bores me to write novels, descriptions. I don't find it interesting - I can't go for two pages describing a room. I don't write biographical stuff, or report on people. I couldn't. It's too personal. Everyone is seen by different facets. That's why when it becomes black and white and these assholes read it, it becomes gospel - because it's in print.

If you don't stay in yourself and you look around, it feeds you. I look at the under belly. I don't look at the cashier - I look at the drag queens in the corner. This is what sells admission tickets. I'm surprised *The Sound of Music* does well, hee hee.

You don't go out and do a movie, you do moment to moment. Try to get moments to work. If they work, you've got a film. It has to have that heart, it has to transpose. Every time the projectionist throws that film up on the projector, it brings back that moment. That doesn't happen much in films - it's technique put together to manipulate heartstrings. It's a group effort, a film. It's not a great thing. Painting is great, writing is great - filmmaking is not.

Single system, I didn't have an assistant. A sound man and a grip. Hand-held. I am accused of being egocentric, but it came out of the neccessity of being a low-budget filmmaker. I can do it quicker than somebody else can. When you work for $1.98 you gotta do it for pennies.

Artists are nasty. When we're working I'm a monster - and I know that - but it's the only way you can get it done for that money. Low budget means you can't do it again.

You can't make a movie with an Auricon. I learned the hard way - you can't cut away, it's not double system. Very long clips - up to three minutes, none shorter than forty-five seconds, which is long. The sound is twenty-four frames ahead - a second. So you have elaborate blocking on all of them. In the early Milligan films you know he's gonna cut to another angle whenever there's a beat.

You can get about twelve minutes a day on the Auricon. It only weighs about eight pounds, self-blimped, single system. You can go anywhere, it's so portable. We shot 'em in about six days. I did all my own stills. I tried to tell a story with the stills. They don't do that anymore.

My type of filmmaking is a solo painting. I don't believe in rough cuts. A waste of time, too much work. That's for people who have never seen the film. We used to mix at Magno Sound on Seventh Avenue. Sound effects on the dialogue track, cheaper than a fourth track. Live turntable music - two turntables, needle drops. We'd look at the picture, drop the needles, and fade up. Valentino Music, Major Records. Old corny stuff I used to use for all the films. If you listen to the old films, it would be like two tracks going at once. Cacophony. A wild scene, wild music. Nothing sophisticated, just hit 'em over the head and run. Hee, hee.

I think you should put the accounting at the end of every film. Where the $50,000 went. I would love to do that. People say, "Andy, you're a rebel, you're bringing down the sale price right there." On every film I make, I'd love to put the accounting on the end.

If I got an offer from a big studio tomorrow, I'd probably turn it down. Because I'd lose my temper with them after a few days. Why go through the pretense? It's obscene, the big money ... even that they pick over like vultures.

I thought the campaigns were trashy. They all look the same. No class. Yet Mishkin knows what he's doing - he knows how to package trash. He knows how to take anything and turn it into a dollar.

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"No one understands the relationship with Mishkin - the S&M there is *unreal*," John Borske told me. "It seemed to me Mishkin was grinding Andy almost specifically. Knowing when it would get him. All the push and shove he would do, he would finally win. He did it to get control of the pictures.

"The initial films were like wars, they really were. It was a constant fight. *Twenty years* of hating someone's guts. We're talkin' about a series of films, not one or two. I can't understand it - why, if Mishkin got everything, would Andy keep going back to him? Mishkin was guaranteed to fuck up the aesthetic value, guaranteed to piss Milligan off. *Guaranteed*. If this man is really hosin' Andy the fuck down, why would he turn around and make another film for him and get totally hosed *again*? Twenty years of getting screwed the same way - there must be a bond somewhere."

Andy Milligan's relationship with the Mishkins - William Senior and son Lew (a particular thorn in Andy's side starting in the late sixties) - is one of those classic film business tales. Milligan began his feature career making *The Promiscuous Sex* for William Mishkin and made one of his very last for Lew in 1987, the aptly titled *Monstrosity*. Every one of the Mishkin pictures was a battle.

The Mishkins had a reputation for penny-pinching that went far beyond thrift. One former associate who went on to much bigger success in Hollywood evaded my inquiries, saying only, "I don't have much to say about Mishkin that's printable." Another anonymous detractor recalled watching in horror as William Mishkin haggled a supplier down five bucks off a bill. "The absolute low end of the movie biz, the absolute rockbottom."

William Mishkin was tough. "Will would negotiate you down because you wanted to be in the movies," said screenwriter Straw Weisman. "It was almost like you had to pay for the opportunity to be involved. They hired you for the day - and the day was twenty-nine hours long."

But most people admit that, while the Mishkins drove an impossibly hard bargain, they were not dishonest. Filmmaker Simon Nuchtern said William "made the worst deal possible he could with you, but he would give you what he said he would. I've worked with much worse people since." "The Mishkins never screwed anybody," said former bookkeeper Jerry Garibaldi. "The Mishkins were honest, 'cause I saw their books all the time. They never cheated anyone, which is rare in that business."

William Mishkin was not exactly forthcoming with the grosses of his pictures with Andy. [*Mishkin was very cagey, declining to give me a single figure on Andy's box office. In a 1969* Variety *ad he claimed* Kiss Me *grossed a third of a million - if you cut the hype in half, that's still not a bad gross for a $10,000 investment. Mishkin spoke of each picture's returns in the vaguest of terms* - Promiscuous Sex *was "moderately successful - not tremendous, but moderately successful."* Naked Witch *was "poor - it didn't go, didn't do enough business."* Kiss Me *was "successful, but not as successful as I hoped - not even as big as* Filthy Five*, which was very good."*] "All of them made something," he demurred. "None of them were smash hits like *Orgy at Lil's Place*. That was my biggest by far." All Mishkin would reveal concerning his financial arrangement with Milligan was that "Andy was given *x* dollars for making the picture, and he would own part of it and I would own part of it - with the option to buy his share by further payment of *x* dollars.

"The reason that was put in? I was assured that the picture would be finished and it would be of reasonable quality. If it wasn't, I wouldn't buy him out. And he'd own a picture that was not salable - because if I couldn't handle it, *nobody* could. The pictures he made for others just didn't do it."

John Borske recalled the torture of prying production funds out of Mishkin. "We'd do it for $10,000, so Mishkin would give Andy $3,000. OK, the first $3,000 Andy would buy carpets for the fuckin' house, so we're back to

$4.00. So there we are, trying to shoot the film on zero, and it was like, 'Let's shoot the carpet while it's still fresh.' Then it was up to Bill Mishkin to come down with the next money, so now everybody's in debt. Nobody's got carfare for the Staten Island Ferry, it's turning into a real horror show....

"You never got your money - if Andy owed me a hundred, he only paid me thirty. It was always a piecemeal thing. Andy always owed me money. He *still* owes me money."

Compounding the problem was the fact that whatever money Andy latched onto burned a hole straight through his pocket. When he was flush, he was generous, but usually Andy was flat broke. Matt Baylor recalled discussing Milligan with a wealthy uptown friend of his. "Clint liked Andy's pictures. I asked, 'Why don't you invest in his pictures?' I'll never forget what he said: 'Because Andy Milligan is no businessman.'"

On a career level, dealing with Mishkin certainly qualified as a deal with the devil. The bright light of the Caffe Cino now found himself trapped in an exploitation ghetto. Mishkin wasn't interested in graduating to more expensive product, and Milligan didn't have the patience to do anything about it. He became known as the man who made movies cheaper than anyone, an industry laughingstock. Andy ground out the pictures for Mishkin, fought for a share of the proceeds, then fumed until he gave in and agreed to do another. He would never escape.

"Andy, I don't know how he made a living," said director Joe Sarno. "It makes me cry to think about it."

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THERE'S TWO WILLIAM MISHKINS - the one who's literate and the one who has to have tits 'n' ass. He played tootsies with bigwig Bingo Brandt. Got my movies in right away by paying $1,500 under the table. Bingo would shove everybody waiting aside and let William in. I'd finish a film and within two weeks it would open. And there'd be a waiting list. I gave Bingo some beautiful cuff links once....

I was supposed to get twenty-five percent on *Naked Witch*. Mishkin kept saying it hadn't shown a profit. Eventually he said, "Well Andy, I'll give you a buyout." *Naked Witch* came in at ninety-seven minutes and my contract was for ninety. The buyout, I think, was $3,000. Later on he gave me a check for $1,200 and said, "Well, it was seven minutes over and it cost me this much to blow it up." So he took that out. Whaddaya gonna do? That's the type of guys the Mishkins are.

Bill was cheap and petty, but once he agreed to something he stuck to his word. He's a gentleman, actually. A cheap bastard, but a gentleman. But only a gentleman when necessary. When it comes to a penny, he turns cold. "That's the way it is; take it or leave it." The Mishkins never compliment. Bill never compliments; neither does the son. They run on negativism. All my films were mutilated. ... they were too cheap to make new prints.

Mishkin was so cheap he wouldn't even give you a pass. It was a big trauma if I wanted to go see my own films. "Oh, Andy, they don't allow guests."

Lemme tell ya something - Jews will kill ya in court and the next day they call ya up and wanna take you out for golf. They don't make enemies. They'll sell their mother for money. It's very Jewish to steal - they think it's good business to be a thief, a chiseler. You have to be prejudiced.

Bill's always been an insomniac. His wife is crippled. He had to take care of her. Bill spends his life pushing her around. Nice, a real lady. Typical nouveau riche. Sloane's interior. Proper, but nothing really great. I always got an ominous feeling when I went there. Like death.

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While cutting *Naked Witch* at Camera Mart in New York City, Milligan ran into a trio of characters doing business as ASA: Freddy Abels, Steve Siegal, and a third partner whose name he couldn't remember. Together they had just made an exploitation film for $80,000, and, watching Milligan at work, they asked him what his pictures cost. When he told them he had made two

full-length features for under $ 10,000 apiece, he suddenly found himself in business with ASA. He made three pictures for them in 1967. *Depraved!* and *The Degenerates* came in at $11,000 each, and the color blowup on *The Ghastly Ones* helped raise the budget to $13,000.

Having already made a period piece for pennies, Milligan went no budget futuristic for *The Degenerates*. In the year 2000, three men search for survivors of a nuclear holocaust. They come upon five sisters living on an abandoned farm. The particularly deranged Ivy lives in the woods, while Violet - "a man-hating modern amazon" who burned her father alive for making incestuous advances - leads the pack and sexually abuses the others. The men have their way with most of the women - until Violet discovers what's going on. She runs amok, killing the men by knife and pitchfork, accidentally stabbing sister Rose in her murderous frenzy. Ivy sets a car on fire, then becomes hysterical when she realizes Violet is inside, burning to death.

Milligan had a knack for finding disturbing locations. *The Degenerates* was shot in an eerie abandoned mansion in Woodstock, New York. "The house was haunted," said Hope Stansbury, who played Ivy. "It had been a home for retarded children ... all these metal toys lying around rusted."

The ever-eccentric Stansbury made quite an impression on her fellow thespians. "Hope was outta left field, all that mascara on her eyes," said Vernon Newman. "She was out in the clouds somewhere." Newman recalled the day he was startled by screams coming from outside the house. He looked out the window to see Hope close to hysterics. "A horse had followed her home." Milligan dressed the sisters in see-through burlap dresses, a sort of femme version of his *Deathwatch* costumes.

Depraved! was a modern-day tale of subversive sexuality in Manhattan. The ad tag lines were particularly ludicrous. "Deviating from Love's Middle Road! They Played the Games That Are Only Talked About in Whispers! LSD Orgy - They Came, They Saw, They Participated! A Swinger's Tour of the Far-Out, Unnatural and Forbidden Ways of Love!"

Three couples engage in swapping. One of the women is sadistically burned with a cigarette. The next day an effeminate office worker seduces one of the men after he recounts his sexual high jinks of the previous night. Lee, a bisexual model, drugs Vera, then abuses her in the ladies room. One couple attend a weird transvestite party where gender-bending makes it difficult to "tell the players without a scorecard."

The couples take LSD together ("Andy doesn't know much about drugs," recalled Hal Borske, shaking his head. "In the script he had them smoking 'LST.' I made corrections.") and one of the men follows another into the bathroom to grope him, only to have his advances rebuffed and his head shoved into the toilet. One of the women jumps out a window to her death.

Both *Depraved!* and *Degenerates* featured Annie Linden, a wiry, boyish redhead with extensive theatrical training who'd be one of the few in Milligan's company to go on to work in other sexploitation pictures (with director Sande N. Johnson). Linden was an utter professional - and a tough cookie who could handle Andy. "He engendered in us the feeling of being in a big family. You got that in the theater, and it was very present in Andy's movies." Linden wasn't thrown by the one-take pace. "For me it became such a challenge to work in that kind of chaos - knowing you didn't have too many takes to get it right, to create a character."

Robert Burgos, who refused to fake putting out a cigarette on Linden's breast in *Depraved!*, was another who insisted that Andy had a very personal involvement with the cinematic nightmares he was creating. "He would *really* enjoy it. He would come from behind that camera and his eyes were bulging, just popping out of his head - you thought he was gonna have an orgasm or a heart attack."

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In the mid-sixties Milligan purchased a Victorian manse within walking distance of the Staten Island Ferry. The house at 7 Phelps Place became Milligan's Hollywood Central - always in a state of disrepair, half of it still set-dressed from last week's period-piece production. All sorts of actors, crew members, and flotsam passed through the joint. "In the course of a

day, you'd shoot ten people and then never see those people again in your entire life," said John Borske.

Borske recalled a transvestite cast member showing up at Phelps. "I was gonna go out and pay the cab driver. She said, 'Don't worry about it, darling - I gave him a blow job on the ferry on the way over.' Talk about cutting down on expenses for the film!"

As Matt Baylor, who lived at Phelps from time to time remembered "Andy was sporting a hat, an officer's cap, sorta. He looked like a little sailor ... Cap'n Andy." Baylor snickered recalling Cap'n Andy aboard the Staten Island Ferry, charging off toward the men's room in hot pursuit of some Neanderthal thug. Milligan's conquests du jour invariably ended up in a scene or two of his current celluloid opus, each a queen for a day. "Right outta jail and straight to Andy," said Hal.

Milligan was constantly rewriting scenes, admitting to me that photocopying was so "expensive" he gave cast members only the pages they were in. The result? "No actor ever saw a complete script, so you never knew who the hell you were," said John Borske, adding that Milligan's limited direction - "Just *do it*, babe!" - had the more Method-minded thespians in tears.

A stunning brunette, Carol Vogel appeared in both *Depraved!* and *The Ghastly Ones*. Hers was the bloody head on a platter exploited in the latter film's campaign, and, as Hal remembered, it was her liveliness ("Sorry, Andy - I blinked!") that necessitated an unheard-of two takes for the shot. Vogel, who went on to a long TV career, was mortified that anybody might see the films. "I think he paid us $250 and you had to carry the equipment. He made us pay our own ferry fare!" As for the sets, "It all fell down ten minutes after he put it up. If you leaned the wrong way, your costume fell off." John Borske recalled madly building sets in one room as Milligan raged against hapless actors trying to finish a scene in another. "Andy was completely, frantically insane - yelling and screaming," said Vogel. "One time he actually shot without any film in the camera. Matt and Andy used to get in arguments. Once Matt said, 'Cut!' Andy got real mad at him. "*I'm* the director. *I* say cut!'"

Released in 1968, *The Ghastly Ones* benefits from the singular presence of Maggie Rogers, a veteran who'd been with Andy since *Deathwatch*. She plays a maternal monster not only in *The Ghastly Ones* but in *The Naked Witch, Seeds, Tricks of the Trade,* and *Torture Dungeon* as well. Rogers had a spectacular mug - craggy and angular, like the constipated face of a dried apple or a jack-o'-lantern left out in the sun - and seems to relish every word that dripped from Milligan's poison pen. Her amped-up delivery put Andy's "I hate Mommy" across with particular gusto.

Milligan spoke of Rogers with the utmost respect, but that didn't mean he could control his darker impulses. Actor Vernon Newman recalled a bedroom scene featuring the actress. "They had the door closed and I just remember she let out this bloodcurdling scream and man, we all came to a stop. She was screamin' and beggin', 'Andy please, stop, please stop!' Her husband had been in a bad car accident and apparently what they were doin' reminded her, brought it all back. I don't think Andy stopped."

Another Milligan archetype in *The Ghastly Ones* is Hal Borske as Colin Trask, the first in a series of murderous gimps with hearts of gold that Borske would play. At one point in the picture the ever-ghastly Colin engages in a bit of frenzied rabbit-chewing. Andy used an actual dead bunny, which had been without a pulse for who knows how long. "I was really gagging ... a mouthful of blood," said Hal, who then found himself literally on fire during the big finale as the flames from his kerosene-doused hump leaped to his head. "I'm screaming, *'Put me out*, for Christ's sake!' I'm thinkin', 'Oh, shit, I'm gonna die for this fuckin' movie!'"

Milligan loved fire, and John Borske remembered a pyrotechnical mishap for another nameless movie that was nearly their last. "It was like a murder scene, a real murder scene. ... I had laid the camera down. Andy just threw gasoline *all over and threw a match in the fuckin' room*. He said, 'The fuckin' *building's* goin' up!' We're talking about serious flames. You could hear us both screaming on film. The girl we set on fire was in the kitchen, she was layin' there and her *head* was actually burning. She could've burned her head off!"

When Milligan needed a bloody beheading prologue for *The Ghastly Ones*, Hal reprised his role as Colin, although he admits by that time he'd lost the character's monster teeth. "Just fake it, babe," Andy told him. There was no post-shoot transportation, of course. "It was about ten blocks away from where Andy was living. Here I am full of blood with a meat cleaver, and we're walkin' home to Andy's house!"

"I want what's coming to me" is the mantra of *The Ghastly Ones*, and Milligan makes sure everybody gets theirs in the end. It is sometime around the turn of the century when the Crenshaw daughters and their husbands gather in New York City at the office of Lawyer Dobbs. The time has come for their late father's estate to be settled.

The will has an odd proviso: the three couples must live together in "sexual harmony for a period of three days" at the family estate. "This house must know married love in those three days - a love that it had never known from your mother and I." On the third day, Lawyer Dobbs is to arrive to distribute the wealth.

The couples meet at Crenshaw Manor, where they are greeted by long time servants Hattie, Martha, and half-wit Colin. Everyone is artificially cheerful at first, but things quickly unravel. The women are shown to be manipulative, money-grubbing beasts, the men ineffectual dupes controlled by sex. Husbands and wives start picking each other apart, and sister turns against sister as they vie for their inheritance.

A maniac starts killing off the guests one by one until only two sisters are left. In the climactic ending it is revealed that Hattie is actually a Crenshaw half-sister, spurned by an evil stepmother who is the root of all the hatred in the family. She prepares to finish off the two sisters with a meat cleaver and blame it on Colin, whom she has already set on fire, but in his dying moments Colin attacks Hattie and the meat clever winds up in her head. The remaining sisters are hysterical with shock, but then a doorbell rings. "*Lawyer Dobbs!*" they both shout in greedy anticipation. The end.

The Ghastly Ones - the first of a handful of Milligan features to make it to tape (it was banned in Britain as a "video nasty" upon release as *Blood Rites*

in the early eighties) - was Andy's first move beyond black and white. "In Cranium-Cleaving Color!" shouted the ads.

Like a tasteless splatter of kiddie spin-art from the state fair, *The Ghastly Ones* is a test for the eyeballs, with a psychedelic title sequence, laughable gore effects, and sets and costumes that are outrageously garish - Andy believed that when blowing up to 35mm, colors had to be extreme to register. *Film Bulletin* reviewer Joe Dante (later the director of *Gremlins*) reported that the film "looked like a home movie from Bedlam and gives evidence of being processed in a dirty bathtub."

One scene of the three sisters - in absurd "Victorian" hats cobbled together from a mishmash of flower-power flotsam, clucking it up over lunch as waiter Matt Baylor (looking hoodlumish and very un-1800s) serves cucumber sandwiches - is pricelessly kooky, as are nonsensical "suspense" scenes with Maggie Rogers shrouded in a robe and sporting a meat cleaver.

Annie Linden gives one of her characteristically extreme performances, jabbering away as the sister in charge, and Richard Romanus, soon to be central to the cast of Scorsese's *Mean Streets*, fails to add dignity to a foppish, angst-ridden husband who winds up sawed in half in the basement. The acting is uniformly mannered, even stylized, with characters swooshing in and out of scenes while slamming doors, pointing fingers, and screaming pained, vengeful diatribes. Nobody listens.

The morose, solitary puppeteer now had flesh and blood acting out his grotesque Punch-and-Judy shows, yet the herky-jerky rhythms remain one can practically see the strings on Andy's living marionettes. Even by the bargain-basement standards of exploitation film, Milligan's pictures are unshakeably weird, like a child's nightmare. Everything is fractured and hysterical and half-told, as if some arrested-development adolescent locked away in the family closet has busted loose to tell all. *The Ghastly Ones'* message? Women and men destroy each other, families demolish everything, and people are just no damn good. Milligan would revisit the "family reunion equals total destruction" theme again and again in future films, most notably in *Seeds*.

Sam Sherman, distributor of the 1969 biker bad trip *Satan's Sadists* and a zillion other bits of drive-in voodoo, came up with the title and campaign. "I thought truth in advertising wouldn't be bad because the picture really was ghastly, so I called it *The Ghastly Ones*." Surveying Milligan's collected oeuvre left Sherman scratching his head. "I just couldn't believe that they could be booked. They were the smallest pictures you could make ... pictures that shouldn't have seen the light of a theater."

Andy must have had great expectations for the future. He had three new movies out, and, with Mishkin out of the picture, perhaps this time he'd see some cash. What Milligan didn't know was that his three new partners were in a legal tangle over an exploitationer they'd made with Jerry Balsam, whose JER Pictures would distribute all three of Milligan's latest.

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ASA PRODUCTIONS WERE INTO JERRY BALSAM for a couple hundred thousand. He had them in bondage. And when I asked for accounting after three months - two films were out - they said, "You have to go see Jerry Balsam." So I go over there and here's this manicured, white-haired, charming gentleman and he says, "No, no, no, I don't have any accounting for you. There's not much you can do about it. You're a third person." I said, "Whaddaya mean?" He said, "Talk to your lawyer."

So he comes down to my lawyer's office and says, "Yeah, they're into me for $200,000." I went to ASA and they wouldn't join me in a lawsuit against Balsam because he had them by the balls. So he sat there and said, "Yeah, I'll make a couple of hundred thousand off each film, but you're lucky if you get three. I'll give you three right now." My lawyer said, "Take it, nothing we can do." That's how you learn. [*Balsam was unfazed by Milligan's assertions but declined to discuss specifics when I spoke to him in the late eighties. "I hear Andy's been saying bad things about me. I could care less."* The Ghastly Ones *did big drive-in business coupled with* The Headless Eyes*, a ridiculous shocker directed by future porno vet Ron Sullivan. "We did very well with that; we did a lot of business," said Balsam. "If I gave you a number, next thing I know Andy*

would be on the phone." Balsam went on to dismiss both Degenerates *and* Depraved! *as "pieces of crap. They were pictures. More than that I can't say."]*

We shot *Ghastly Ones* at 7 Phelps Place. Let me tell you a story about Phelps Place. It was a derelict house; I bought it for S7,500. I was fixing it up, way up on the third floor, and I heard kids playing on the staircase. I came down, there was nobody there. Sounded like they were running down the stairs on cardboard. Years later Jeannie Cusick and I were doing a play at my theater, the Troupe. I mentioned 7 Phelps Place and she turned white. She said, "My brother died there. He was six years old. We used to run downstairs on cardboard." Then *I* turned white.

Strange things have happened to me. We were in Gerry's antique shop. This pigeon walked in. He was scared to death of sick birds, things like that. And this pigeon walks in the door. And it's sick. And it waddles up about ten feet away. It looks at Gerry and it looks at me and says, "Coo, coo." And Gerry says, "Oh, it's sick, let's get rid of it. I don't want to *touch* it." I said, "No, it's asking for help." And the pigeon walked to the door, looked back at us, said, "Coo, coo," and walked right out into the traffic. Committed suicide.

Another time at Gerry's my friend Mabel Warren was dying of cancer. A wonderful character. About eighty or ninety. If you were crossing a street where a car moved on her during a red light she'd hit the hood of the car with her cane. Cantankerous old biddy.

And the week before she died - it was about one A.M. - Mabel called. I wasn't home and she said to Gerry, "I wanna talk to Andy about somethin'. I gotta tell him somethin'." A week later, it was Saturday night, I was gonna bring Mabel her medicine - she had cancer of the throat - and there was no answer. So I got the guy downstairs to open her place up and she was dead in the kitchen. The cops came in; they didn't even cover her body. I was very upset. They finally covered it with a police coat. They were going through all of her things - the closet, her bankbooks. That's what the police do in New York. And the

firemen. They have picks in their back pocket for pickin' the gold teeth out.

Anyway, a week after, at one A.M. Saturday night - a week after she died - the phone rings. Gerry's half asleep. I pick it up. "Andy – Andy – Andy -" It was Mabel. And she hung up. A week after she died. I never knew what it was she was trying to tell me, *ahahahahahahahahahahahaha!*

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Discouraged by the JER Pictures debacle, Milligan went right back to William Mishkin for more abuse. In 1968 came *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me!; Tricks of the Trade*; and *The Filthy Five*, all released by Mishkin.

Based on a story by Mishkin himself, *Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me!* was originally to feature "a Marilyn Monroe character and a Marlon Brando character as the two leads," he recalled. "In the story I referred to them as Marilyn and Marlon." The actual script by Joe Bush lost the movie star monikers and concentrated on the grime. It's the only Milligan picture to boast a theme song.

Kiss Me got great reviews. "A whirligig orgy!" exclaimed the *Post*. "Unvarnished lower-class New York," snickered the *New York Times*. "It's not for junior," warned *Boxoffice*, which also declared it "a brooding, haunting, introspective study of lust and loneliness." *Variety* gave it a rave, noting, "The whole thing ends in a shocking tragedy, almost unheard of in this type of film." This was one of the biggest hits Andy made for Mishkin, breaking the house record in its twenty-four-week run at the Rialto, eclipsing Joe Sarno's Swedish coproduction, *Inga*, not to mention Radley Metzger's *Therese and Isabel* and *I, A Woman*, [*William Mishkin on Radley Metzger: "His pictures were much, much more expensively made and aimed for straight houses - they played a lot more theaters. The odd part about it was, his pictures did not do as well as some of my pictures did on 42nd Street."*] all pictures with budgets much greater than Milligan's $10,000 plus.

The story concerns Jean, a bombshell "nymphomaniac" ("No One Man Could Satisfy Her!") who falls for Eddie, a friend of her mechanic husband, Stan, who is masochistically devoted to Jean - except when she neglects their son, Jimmy. Stan comes home one night to find an ambulance outside their home - poor little Jimmy has fallen out the window to his death. He finds Jean with Eddie and goes berserk, beating him. Eddie's wife returns home to find her bloody husband, then they run off to dissuade Stan from killing Jean. They arrive to find them on the rooftop of their apartment, and during the fight the couple plummet to their death.

Natalie Rogers, outfitted in a cheap blonde wig, played the female lead. She would also appear in Milligan's *Tricks of the Trade* plus a few other exploitation pictures. She found Andy unique. "Porn-type directors, they're very cynical and don't care. They just want to make something with blood, nudity, sex to make a buck. That is not Andy at all. He wanted to have a very strong emotional experience. It was like a work of art." Rogers wound Milligan's clock by asking what her motivation was. "I was very involved with studying my Method acting stuff. Andy would say, 'Oh, never mind, never mind - just go in the kitchen and *cry*!'"

Rogers reportedly drove Milligan around the bend and, perhaps as a result, Cap'n Andy was up to his usual violent shenanigans. "There was a fight where there was a bottle involved," recalled Matt Baylor. "It shattered into a million pieces and went down Natalie's back and she started screaming and crying while Andy ... kept filming. The scene was for real." During a fight scene with the husband, "Natalie really got belted," said actor Peter Ratray. "Other people would've shot from the other side of her face so it wouldn't show, but Andy loved that big blister on her mouth."

Woe to the actor who stood up to Milligan or wanted to "discuss" a role. "It was simply, 'You do it my way, the Milligan way - or not at all,'" said John Borske. "But that's part of what made the film, too. He'd pull the performances out of them, just be brutally frank and make them do it. He'd say, 'You're an actress, fuckin' *do* something.' "

Invariably Andy would go beyond extracting a performance - he'd find a way to crush them emotionally. "You can't push people that far," said John

Borske. "He would be so hard on them they just wouldn't do it again. My wife still hates him for being so brutal. This chopping down process, it was brutal, just brutal. He would start butcherin' the girl, go through that S&M bullshit of really taking control and leaving them a wreck when they left the building. Andy could've gotten into snuff films very easy." [*Donald Kvares indulged in an interesting bit of pop psychology when it came to Andy and his leading ladies. "Any man who can direct a woman as sensitively as he can, can't hate women. I think he loves them and hates them. He loves them platonically. I think he has an enormous attraction to their grace, their elegance. It's puritanism once again - he puts them on a pedestal. When they turn out to be funky, or real or ballsy - he hates them. Almost any woman Andy has connected himself to has been beautiful - Hope Stansbury, Annie Linden, Natalie Rogers - all these women are the antithesis of his mother. Somehow he's searching for a higher level of woman."*]

As always, despite whatever wild visions Milligan was putting on the big screen, he was a prudish dictator once the camera was clicked off. "Andy keeps you on a leash, meaning do what he says," said Hal Borske. "'OK, babe, now we're going out.' 'Now we are going to have *fun*.' Now we will stop having fun.' It was like the Army."

"He'd impose his morals on people," said John Borske. "Hal would go out and get drunk, he'd get back, and Andy would fuckin' brutalize him the whole afternoon. It was like a game bein' played over and over. It got to the breaking point."

And yet even those he tortured found him fascinating. "There was something about Andy, y'know?" said Natalie Rogers. "He could exude a very masculine quality that was very magnetic and very attractive. Hard to understand him. He really is mysterious, doesn't really reveal himself. He shows this tough exterior. ... I was a little afraid of him. I thought he was very lonely."

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Tricks of the Trade remains one of the more obscure Milligan / Mishkin pictures, probably because of its overt male homosexuality - rather brazenly

illustrated by a man-to-man smooch on the one-sheet itself. All that remains of the film is the campaign, although Milligan kept a copy of the script. (Andy was so overwhelmed by his own prodigious output he had filed away the script for *Tricks* under the title of another of his pictures, *Gutter Trash*.) Fearing children, Fred Clark refuses to have sex with his wife, Salina, without protection. Salina's mother, Minnie, is the quintessential Milligan matriarch, interfering with Fred and Salina's marriage at every turn. After a row with the mother-in-law, Fred seeks refuge in a Lower East Side bar where he is seduced by a swinging couple, Stud and Marcy Perkins. "Just swing with the moment," they tell the reticent Fred, "and squeeze every bit out of it you can."

Unbeknownst to Fred, the couple secretly photograph him kissing Stud and set out to blackmail him. Fred seeks answers from Dr. Pauline Flood, a freewheeling psychiatrist who, in addition to seducing him, tells Fred to dump his mother-in-law. "Remember what I told you. Balls! Balls! And more *balls*! That's why I'm a good psychiatrist. It's taken me years to train myself to think like a man and act like a female." Fred reveals an additional reason for his contraceptive obsession: his first sexual encounter with a woman resulted in venereal disease as well as a pregnancy, causing Fred to be ostracized from his family. Dr. Flood advises Fred to go home and impregnate his wife.

But any happy ending is foiled because Salina has discovered evidence of Fred's Lower East Side high jinks and heads downtown to investigate, whereupon she's raped by two men. "There's just two of us, but there's three parts to you, baby, and we're gonna use every one of them." In the mean time, Stud and Marcy insist that Fred meet them at their Avenue B abode, where fellow thugs Four Eyes, Misery, Eenie, Meenie, Minie, and Moe threaten him, demanding he cough up five thousand bucks. When Fred refuses, they abuse him and shoot him full of drugs. The movie ends with Salina sobbing over her lost husband and Minnie berating her daughter for marrying such a loser. We then see Fred wandering the streets of the Bowery in a drug-induced daze.

It's too bad the picture is lost, because the massively entertaining script was obviously a labor of love for Andy. At one point Misery tongues a girlie

pinup, then tears up the centerfold when a fellow hood, Freda, calls him in to manhandle an unconscious female victim. Milligan's script directions here are uncharacteristically detailed, perhaps ominously so:

CUT TO: HIS SHADOW ON THE WALL. HE REMOVES A WIDE BELT AND BEGINS TO BEAT THE FIGURE RHYTHMICALLY AND PASSIONATELY. WE HEAR HIS UTTERANCES OF PROFANITY DURING THIS PASSIONATE BEATING. THE WORDS "BITCH," "WHORE" AND "SLUT" ARE AUDIBLE TO US AS WELL AS THE STROKES OF THE BELT ON HER BARE BODY. THIS CARRYING ON BECOMES MORE INTENSE AND HE CROUCHES CLOSER TO THE BODY AND BEGINS TO MAKE LOVE TO IT WITH HIS BODY AND HIS MOUTH, ETC.

WE HEAR FREDA'S VOICE OVER THE END OF THIS SCENE URGING HIM ON AND OBVIOUSLY ACHIEVING A GREAT DEAL OF PLEASURE FROM THIS VOYEURISM.

Freda: Go Misery! Go! Go! Go! Baby! Go Misery! Go. Go ... FADEOUT.

Little else is recalled of this poisonous gem other than the fact that the final Bowery scene almost turned into a riot because, as John Borske remembered, the actor playing Fred "looked like an actor who was playing a bum and the other bums resented it. 'Whaddaya bringing a fake bum in here? Why don't you use a real bum?' All of a sudden they had a union, started throwing bottles!"

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Busting loose toward the end of Milligan's very hectic 1968 was *The Filthy Five*, Andy's biggest Mishkin picture ever. As far as William's bombastic campaigns go, *The Filthy Five* set a new high - or low, depending on how you view it. "Oversexed and Underdressed! They Loved Like Animals and Fought Like Beasts to Destroy Each Other! These People Were Filth Like You've Never Seen Before!" Mishkin prided himself on the title, inspired by *The Dirtiest Show in Town* and *The Dirty Dozen*. On a marquee, Mishkin proudly pointed out, the title "looked like *The* Fucking *Five* - much worse." Written by Milligan with Gerry Jacuzzo, the preposterous script concerns

boxer Johnny Longo, who knocks around chubby working girl Rose White ("I played 'Rose White, A Whore,'" said actress Jacqui Colton. "That was how it was described"). Rita Roman (Annie Linden), an aging star and lesbian heroin addict, is cast in a TV show with Johnny. They quarrel endlessly. Rose, who is fearful she will lose Johnny to TV stardom, conspires with Rita to destroy him. Rita asks Rose if she minds if Johnny comes back with broken legs. "I don't give a damn if he can still get it up," says Rose. "I'll wrap it in cellophane," quips the evil Rita, who throws an orgy and slips Johnny LSD. Johnny is drawn into Rita's bullfight game, and, charging her, jumps out the window, crippling himself for life. Meaning that he will remain dependent on Rose forever.

Everyone who saw *Filthy Five* raved about it, insisting that it was one of Milligan's best (allegedly it was a big favorite of Andy Warhol himself). Despite the story line - Milligan on boxing? - the movie was widely interpreted as Milligan's statement on the sixties. Linden's bullfight with Longo was obviously a nod to Freddie Berko's flight-of-death demise at Johnny Dodd's apartment, and Milligan raised other spectres as well.

Hal Borske, cast as a gay fight promoter who comes on to Longo, remembered *The Filthy Five* as "one of the times I really wanted to kill fuckin' Andy Milligan. I had to tell this story of how come I'm such a queer, and it was about my friend who killed himself. It was a week after Joe Cino killed himself. Andy said, 'Think about Joe, babe, think about Joe dying.' Turned me right off. I finally said to Andy, 'I'm not doin' this, *fuck you*!' I did, but it was awful and it was cut."

The film featured a three-way sex scene with Gary Stone and Fernando, a bearded West Village S&M legend who also had a cameo in *Kiss Me* (Fernando's sole Milligan memory: "I didn't get paid, so my recollection is he's very cheap"). The "woman" in the middle was Selena Robbins, who was actually a transsexual. It amused Milligan no end that he-she Robbins was featured prominently in the campaign.

Boxer Johnny Longo was played by Matt Garth - a pseudonym for Frederick Forrest, soon to achieve Hollywood stardom in movies by Francis Ford Coppola and others. Forrest chuckled recalling his Milligan

experience. "Annie would walk around with her hands over her boobies. No heat in the house. You'd freeze your ass off runnin' around in your jockey shorts!' Forrest remembered that the big finale not only required him to jump out the window to his death, but once off-camera, with the take still running, he had to dash over to jerk a cord that spun a chandelier inside the house - Milligan's delirious last image for the movie. "I had to pull the string - so you participated with the making as well as acting in it," he said, much amused.

Forrest vividly remembered Andy chewing him out for being late for a shoot. "As we were carrying the equipment on the fuckin' Staten Island Ferry - 'Unless you care about your craft, unless you take this more *seriously*, you will never obtain *any* heights in theater *or* film. Now grab that tripod, Frederick.'" But Forrest also praised Milligan. "Andy had a raw edge, more like a Bergman. He had a real feel for what he was doin'. He had a keen visual eye. Humor, too. You don't see that nowadays. He did some terrific stuff." [*The Milligan alumni association includes some rather distiguished characters: Frederick Forrest, Mark Jenkins, Carol Vogel, Richard Romanus, Berwick Kaler, Gavin Reed, and Peter Ratray all have gone on to varying degrees of television and motion picture success. The Milligan aftermath - when the picture actually got unleashed on the world - could be a mortifying experience for an actor.*

Right after making Kiss Me*, Peter Ratray was cast in a prime-time TV show. He was tooling around Manhattan in a limo with a couple of network honchos when they turned the corner onto 42nd Street and there, in front of the Rialto, was "this giant five-foot blowup of me in my jockey shorts nibbling on Nat Rogers's tits, with her blonde wig slightly askew!" Ratray ducked down in the seat and thanked God he wasn't recognized.*

Bob Dahdah was directing "a family show" called Curley McDimple *when* Vapors *- with Dahdah's name emblazoned on the front - opened at a porno theater down the street. "I thought, 'Oh my God, I'm* ruined.*'"*

Some had the opposite reaction. "Three of my Milligan pictures were playin' 42nd Street at the same time!" Hal Borske remembered. "I was walkin' around lookin' at the show cards, hopin' someone would recognize *me!"*]

The Filthy Five got an enthusiastic thumbs up from the *New York Free Press*. Critic Roger Greenspun wrote that Milligan's world "in which everybody is onto everybody's else's vice and probably even shares it, has a Viscontian fatality itself." He went on to call the picture "energetic in a way that exploitation films almost never are, but it is not, to understate the case, very erotic. Milligan seems anti-sex, or at least anti-heterosexual sex."

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***FILTHY FIVE* IS WEIRD. That's got everything in it. $10.5, including blowup. It's an old, old story - "Golden Boy." Typical Hollywood, Clifford Odets. A little wilder, a little nastier.**

There's this very elaborate scene where Annie Linden's nude on top - she takes off this silk dress - and she does a bullfight thing with Fred with a blanket in front of an open window on the second floor. She got him on LSD, and she leads him right out the window. You see him down there with his back broken and everything. She keeps backing away from the window, and, as we pull back, the chandelier is spinning around and around and that's the end of the film.

Fred Forrest, best acting he's done in his life. Fred was never on time, ever. He never had an excuse, he was just never on time. There's a wonderful scene where he beats the hell out of Rose and the phone rings, he has to go. And she's throwing old shoes and things down the stairs at him - "You son of a bitch, you leave me here and I haven't had an orgasm!" We had a lot of wild dialogue like that. I was the first one to use *fuck, shit, cock, cunt* on film. Before it was in.

Quite a few articles said that I did a lot of improvisation. We never improvised. Never. Not a scene was improvised. Very heavily rehearsed. Everything. But *loosely* rehearsed, long elaborate clips. Some of the clips were a hundred feet.

In *Filthy Five* we rehearsed for an hour to get this five-minute scene. We worked Annie so hard on that one. Fight scene. Annie, Gerry, Jacqui Colton, Fred Forrest, Mark Jenkins, Maya Reid. It starts out they're all drunk and they get into a huge fistfight - everybody hitting

everybody - on this big staircase. We had rehearsed, rehearsed, rehearsed. Mikes taped to the staircase. Poor Annie, she had had it - she wanted to go home. I said, "If we leave now, we'll never get it again." Only time I ever saw her lose her patience. Annie was tough ... but I finally tamed her.

Annie Linden never fucked a line. Gerry Jacuzzo, too. Annie's a lovely actress, a pro. Did Annie tell you what Bill Mishkin did one day? Gerry was in the scene with Annie. Confrontation scene where he pulls her sleeves up and finds needle marks on her arm after she claims she isn't on junk any more. Annie's in bed, characters come in and it fades out as they're all climbing on the bed, like an old Dracula thing. Orgy scene.

I was getting good shots for the stills and Bill was there that day. He went over to Annie and said, 'Do you mind?' And pulled her shoulder strap down. He touched her bra strap to move it down. She almost walked out on the film. *I* was ready to walk out of the show. After that I wouldn't have him on the set again. Bill had a rep for open casting calls, looking at topless girls.

Gary Stone and Matt Baylor always did the nude stuff. Kids who had no qualms about it. Free souls. Selena Robbins was beautiful. Selena wasn't a drag, she was a sex change. Tits and everything. Fernando brought her in. Fernando couldn't do lines. He was S&M. Selena, nice kid. Wanted to be an actress but she couldn't act. So she had to run around nude, hee hee.

Bill wanted to meet Selena forever. Mishkin couldn't believe she wasn't a real woman. He'd get all hot. I didn't tell him, then finally one day - "Oh, you know that Selena? Y'know that was a sex change. Silicon tits and her dick cut off." He turned white. Mishkin wanted to know why there were so many homosexuals in the film. I told him they were "good counterpoint," hee hee.

We shot at Phelps Place. I had white shades, and the night we were shooting the orgy scene we didn't have the drapes closed - and these

people are running around nude. Suddenly we hear this whistling and so forth. And we looked and there were hundreds of kids hangin' all around the house, watchin' the shadows on the windows. In Staten Island! It was like a picture show!

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We'd go up to 42nd Street, Hope and Gerry and I went to see one of my double bills. It was interesting. You see glossy million-dollar productions and they're boring. None of my films are. They may be tacky or crudely made, but they're never dull. Theatrical, very theatrical. They look like cinema verite because of the blowup grain and the mobility of the camera. A lot of handheld stuff. They looked like newsreels.

Mishkin says the definition of an obscene film is one that doesn't make money. That's his idea. The only obscenity to me is that you're bored watching it.

Early exploitation are really the best Milligan films. Shocking subjects, shocking dialogue. The black and white ones have more heart than the horror films. They have an intensity that most films don't. Every issue in the sixties was right there. Very primitive - extremely primitive - but an inner heartbeat. Frantic. They're all very seamy. The underbelly of New York and society. They all had in them what was to come of all of Manhattan and your metropolitan cities. Manhattan was always the first in going the worst.

Depraved **is really a wonderful study of Manhattanites - these three couples - who go to the dregs of the barrel. In those days that was untried stuff. A lot of people weren't introduced to the seedy side of life until** ***Midnight Cowboy*****. How can an Englishman come to America and get the real guts of 42nd Street?**

Milligan pictures are very moral pictures, actually. Extremely moral. They show what happens if you fuck around. Even Elmer Gantry - if you get hooked on religion it becomes a drug and you become destroyed by it, too. You can be a real zealot, but even a zealot becomes

a monster-zealotry turns into addiction. Anything does, darlin'. Sex, drugs, alcohol, self-importance, ego, brain intelligence. It's very hard to control anything. Even the most pure thought. All of a sudden you're holier than thou, hee hee. It leads to madness, it really does.

The answer is to go back to the basics of religion - try to be as nice as you can daily. That's what it comes down to. But if you get crass, nasty people, you can't turn the other cheek to them, you have to *kick* them in the other cheek. You have to be as low and depraved as they are. They don't understand anything else.

And that's sad, because it bruises you more. Life makes you bitter and cynical. I'm an injustice collector, babe. I never get over it. You can't stay nice in life. My mother used to say, 'It's a dog-eat-dog world and you have to shit on the other person before he shits on you.'

It's a cancer, a contagious cancer. If the dog you're dealing with has fleas, you come up with bites. Once you're touched by it, you touch others with it. And there's not much you can do about it. Try to hold your monster inside, try to keep it shackled ... I don't know. There's no answer, really. A lot of people don't know anything about this side of life.

What does it take to be a director? The energy to finish a film. All you worry about is survival. You worry about tomorrow. There is no such thing as yesterday. I magic slate every day. Soon as it's over, it's forgotten. If you stick with your memories, it's death. Why should you let anything haunt you? You *did* it - good, bad, or indifferent.

I don't remember anything. I don't think about it. If you're easily crushed by something, how can you be an artist? By a nasty remark - you broke somebody's glasses, or you beat somebody....

There are no laws about anything, really. Only what we inflict on ourselves. You can't analyze anything in life. It's all relative. You can't have morality and be honest, babe. If you're in a den of thieves, what is morality? An artist can't have rules....

Artists pride themselves too highly. Everyone is better at something than someone else, whether they're a whore or they eat shit. So everybody's an artist.

I don't care how I'm remembered. I told everybody that when I die, I'm gonna be cremated. There's gonna be a huge party with whatever money I got left. And I'm gonna be served up in the cheese dip. Served at my own party, hee hee! And the one who takes care of my body will be the only one who knows it. Just think of how many places I can get to after I'm dead! When you're younger, you have a will to survive anything, but when you get older you wonder what's it all about - you're just a dust spot in eternity, you're an aphid on a rose plant, what the hell are you? Let's face it, life is a vale of tears.

8

SEE CANDY IN ACTION

Marriage brings out the worst in people.

- PETRA, IN FASSBINDER'S *THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT*

CANDY WAS A LIVE WIRE. And a bit salty. When I asked if she was aware of her ex-husband's proclivity for sadism, she had a typically blunt answer. "If Andy had ever done any of that to *me* I woulda cut his nuts off and stuffed 'em down his throat." Her southern accent somehow made the response altogether charming.

"I'm pretty opinionated and I'm very independent. I wasn't boring and I'm still not, I tell ya. I came from a little rural community. You learn to be yourself. If you don't pretend to be anything you're not, it works better."

I've interviewed hundreds of people in my life, from kings to kidnappers, but talking to Candy Hammond never failed to thrill me. I went to visit her in the North Carolina country where the Hammond clan lived. She picked me up in a truck, tanned and barefoot, her long brown hair blowing in the wind. She was a fascinating creature, space-alien exotic. She was by no means a classic beauty - a flat profile, a chipmunk overbite - but I never tired of looking at her. Candy radiated life. She exuded miles of character, and there was a sadness alongside the strength.

She shared a ramshackle old house with a tough, athletic blonde who was crazy about Stevie Nicks. Pictures of Candy's mother threatened to overrun the place. Mamma Lou, another eccentric, favored funny hats and bluegrass music and lived within walking distance with Daddy Buck, plus a goat or two.

"Daddy Buck's an electrician, Mamma Lou's the artist," said Candy. "I spent most of my time in a tree readin' a book. The combination of inty-lell-ectual and tomboy." With her New York City days long gone, she seemed bemused

by tall tales of her allegedly wild ways. "I didn't drink, smoke, or do drugs. Too bad I don't live up to my reputation."

Candy now worked as a landscape designer and was in bed by six P.M. "This is the country!" she barked. "I can't help it if you're decadent." She spent a good part of the year in a beachfront shack on the Gulf of Honduras. She booked a cheap steamer to get there and made a meager income off the tourist trade. "She's a real adventuress," said longtime friend Tony Garofano. A generator provided light only four hours a night, and a hurricane had blown through the joint at least once. The native Hondurans loved her. When Garofano visited her they'd head "down the road in her little truck and everybody everywhere is goin', 'Miss Candy, Miss Candy.' Wherever Candy is, she attracts a lot of people. Candy is full-time entertainment."

The idea of Candy and Andy - well, it was hard to envision. But for all his crowing about the opposite sex, Milligan surrounded himself with exquisite women. Candy was a jewel, and the only woman to dare take on the role of Andy Milligan's wife. And despite his attempts to tame her, Candy took no guff. From anyone.

"I'm not the kind of person who could smile and nod happily in the corner. I have to bounce in there and get my own word, even if it means throwing them down, sitting on their chest, and saying, 'Look, fool - it's *my* turn!'"

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Born in Greensboro, North Carolina, Candy Hammond wandered off to New York City in search of a job in fashion "until I met the people in the fashion industry. You meet all these hard drinkin', constantly smokin' women who I think wore their hats to bed - and I just decided I didn't want to become one of them." Candy became a nightclub dancer instead, working topless in Puerto Rico. "I never turned down a free trip."

A constant companion in those days was fellow dancer Tony Garofano. "Our thing was to find private clubs, go out, and dance our brains out all night," he recalled. "Wherever we went Candy was the center. She was able to hustle up anything she wanted. She wasn't working, but managed to live

really well. Candy and I were like the chosen ones. We could get away with anything in those days."

At some point in the early sixties Hammond wound up on Patchen Place, a strange little neighborhood off 10th Street that included among its residents a lesbian novelist, the odd puppeteer, and Andy Milligan.

"Andy had a shop around the corner. He started doin' these movies and asked if I wanted to be in them and I said, 'Oh, sure' and I was in a couple of his little movies and we had a real good time. I just kind of ran in, ran out. I don't even remember the name of any of those movies. They were kind of off-the-wall, weird stuff. Y'know, I never did understand a one of them. But now, in Europe, they like him."

Short and somewhat voluptuous, Hammond appears nude in a number of Milligan films, including *The Promiscuous Sex, Tricks of the Trade, Seeds*, and *Compass Rose*. [*Milligan's other main "nude lead" was Susan Cassidy, whose boisterous presence enlivens* Seeds, Bloodthirsty Butchers, Torture Dungeon*, and others. "Susan was really quite heavy short, plump, with a great big fat can," said Gerry Jacuzzo, who was "really amazed" that Andy used her for nude scenes. "Susan was a really nice girl," said Milligan. "A natural. One of the few females that I liked, really. A four-letter word wouldn't bother her. True free soul."*

Andy revealed to me that one day on Staten Island he had sex with one of his leading ladies, I'll only say that it wasn't Candy Hammond. "It was rough," Milligan said gleefully. "Pure animal, pure animal. 'Oh, you're hurting me.' 'Oh, shut up.' Tee hee. I think I was too rough on her."] It was really fairly innocent, as all Candy did was prance around without clothes or get pawed unconvincingly by one of Andy's gay leads. Mishkin's son Lew dubbed Milligan's movies "sexless sex pictures." Unlike most sexploitationers, Andy never lingered on the hanky-panky. The fully clothed interactions were far seedier. Passion was reserved for scenes of violence.

Typical Andy-Candy fare included a 1969 picture for Mishkin (now lost), *Gutter Trash*. "See Candy in Action!" screamed Mishkin's tag line.

Former model "Pussy" Johnson is serving time in the slammer. Flash back to her career as a nude model. We meet a variety of unsavory characters - Stix, CooCoo, Minky, and Bunny. Each has his or her way with Pussy. She falls in love with the relatively square Nick but can't give up her wild ways. When he leaves her, she freaks out at an orgy, high on STP. The film ends with Pussy in the office of the prison shrink, recounting how each of her cohorts met a bad end. "And to think, if I had accepted Nick, I'd be a free and respectable woman today."

The gutter-smut tabloid *Screw* was so outraged by Milligan's brand of *Gutter Trash* that they spent a full page attacking it on June 15, 1970. "Everything that has anything at all to do with sex is filthy," wrote Dan Mouer. "Everybody pays for every ounce of pleasure with hours of beatings, whippings, rapes, etc., etc., ad nauseum. ... I would take my kid to an orgy before I'd let him get his ideas about sex from movies like this." The movie earned a flaccid twenty-two percent on their infamous "Peter Meter." Humorously, Mouer saw *Gutter Trash* as emblematic of a Deuce plague that only hardcore pornography could wipe out. "I hope the legalization of porn will eventually mean healthy horny sex flicks for all, because Times Square as it is now could easily be moved intact down to Bellevue and I'd never miss it."

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In February 1968, Milligan did the unexpected. He made Candy Hammond his wife. [*Fassbinder, who, not unlike Milligan, terrorized many actresses, in 1970 married one of his leading ladies, Ingrid Caven, who said, "Rainer was a homosexual who also needed women. It's that simple, and that complex."*]

"He asked me, 'Well, you wanna get married, babe?' I said, 'Why not? It's February, there's nothin' else going' on.' It literally happened that way." Plus Candy had just had a fight with her boyfriend Steve. "I thought, 'Well, screw you!'"

Andy's motives for matrimony? "He had decided in his line of business a wife was an asset, and a lot of these guys did not like gay guys, per se. So

he just decided that this was something he needed - and he decided that I would just be as good as anyone else."

The avowed misogynist, happily marching down the aisle with his leading lady. Most people laughed it off, but not Gerry Jacuzzo, who'd been involved with Andy for years by this point. "I thought it was bizarre from day one. Andy never discussed his sexuality. When he told me he was getting married, I just couldn't believe it. Quite honestly I was in a state of shock."

A stunned Allen Bazzini - Andy's next producer - confronted Milligan, asking if he was in his right mind. "Andy said, 'This is only for the press.' I said, 'What press? What are you *talking* about?' I mean, the man is not Cecil B. DeMille."

Andy took the whole thing seriously enough that he and his future bride consulted beforehand with Father Jenks, the Episcopalian priest who would preside over the service. Candy: "We went over to talk to him - y'know, that little chat you have? Andy made me. He made *us* do that. I guess deep down he's a traditionalist." Amazingly, he even reached out to his family by inviting his father.

The ceremony took place on Sunday, February 24, in the spooky old Victorian house at 7 Phelps Place. It was a surreal event. "How could I forget that wedding?" exclaimed Candy. "It was wonderful, except that our guests stole all the wedding gifts."

Milligan was making a picture called *Seeds* at the time. "We were shooting that day, and at the end of shooting we had ten minutes for the marriage," John Borske recalled. "The wedding was held right on the set," added actor Paul Eden. "So it seemed like the wedding was another scene in the movie. Andy was in charge, Andy was directing."

"The wedding was a fucking circus," said Hal Borske. "Every fuckin' maniac in the world was there trying to outdo each other."

Chauncey Howell, later an annoyingly fey news commentator on local New York TV, covered the wedding for *Women's Wear Daily*, announcing in his

weekly column, "As Dietrich fell in love with Josef von Sternberg, so too has Candy given her tender heart to Andy, her director, producer, and friendly neighborhood Svengali." He noted that Milligan was swathed in "dashing yachting attire" and that the stairwell still sported "cherry syrup staining the wall" from the murderous climax of *The Ghastly Ones*.

Candy nearly went without a wedding dress. "Andy kept putting it off to the last minute, and the morning of the wedding, the sucker threw the fabric on the floor and whipped it out. I didn't even have time to try it on beforehand. So I was not in the best of moods." According to Hal Borske, Andy took more pride in the black dress (and matching hat with fake fruit) than the actual wedding. "He said, 'Notice, babe - it's all cut on the bias.' Apparently this was a big fuckin' deal."

Hammond contributed the wedding cake. "I went to my favorite bakery and bought all my favorite cakes and had a big round table and just stacked them, then just filled in all the little holes with fresh flowers. So everybody would have a choice of whatever kind of cake they wanted, from chocolate to pineapple upside down. It looked like one big strange lookin', multicolored, fresh-flower-infested cake."

The flowerboy was an old friend of Candy's from San Juan."An adorable blond guy who wore cutoff velvet pants," she remembered. "He threw flower petals out as he came down the stairs." Tony Garofano was best man and her boyfriend Steve gave her away. "He thought I had taken leave of all my senses. All the way down the stairs he kept whispering, 'The car is right outside - we can walk straight through the crowd, out the door, and proceed to Europe.' *Hahahaha!* I kept saying, 'No, no, no, I know what I'm doing, it's OK.'"

Chauncey Howell reported that as Andy's Auricon camera whirred away in the background, Candy tromped down the aisle, announcing, "Outta ma way, buster! Here comes the bride!" "Her tits were full of people's phone numbers," laughed Hal.

"I went out and bought a bottle of Tattinger's champagne and went around carryin' the bottle, drinkin' out of it, and wouldn't let anybody have any.

Andy kept sayin', 'Well, babe, this bottle is for the both of us.' And I kept sayin', 'Get your own bottle!'" Tony Garofano remembered hearing that "there was a lot of cocksucking going on in the attic." Hal recalled that Andy's father was "bewildered ... the poor man just was wandering around."

That night, Milligan celebrated by going to a gay bar, sans the bride. Bazzini asked Andy if he was going on a honeymoon. "He looked at me like I was crazy. 'What honeymoon? We have to make a *movie*!'"

"Andy was too busy for a honeymoon," Candy concurred. "So I saved up the money I had earned from helping on the movies and I went on a honeymoon by myself - Europe on the QE1. And I pretended like I was Deborah Kerr every inch of the way. I had to travel steerage, but I played it first class." Milligan got mad when she stayed too long overseas. "I ran out of money and I called him to send me some and he said, 'No. You got there, now you get back.'" Candy's boyfriend Steve bailed her out, and she returned to Staten Island to reside with her new husband. It wouldn't last.

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Seeds was produced by Allen Bazzini, a highly agitated, frizzy-haired young jitterbug (and sometime cherry farmer) who had a jones for the motion picture biz. Bazzini was later associated with such quizzical David Durston exploitation wonders as *The Blue Sextet* and *Manhole*, the first gay 3-D porno.

The Bazzini clan owned the Grotto, a theater-district restaurant, and John Borske accompanied Milligan there to discuss financing. Bedlam ensued. Allen had fired the cook and was manning the kitchen himself. All the Bazzinis were screaming at each other. "His mother's a bartender and Milligan doesn't drink, right?" recalled Borske. "So she takes this bottle of whiskey, puts this glass in front of us, and she fuckin' pours it down - some hits the glass, ninety percent doesn't. And she did it again. She was *blind*. I thought, 'This is gonna be one hell of a movie.'"

The budget was originally $7,000, but crawled up to around $12,500, much to the consternation of Bazzini, who in hindsight realized that Andy made it for nothing. "We were only allowed three retakes because of the budget."

The picture was shot mainly at Milligan's Phelps Place residence. "Everything was done quietly. Staten Island didn't know about Andy."

The usual insanity increased with every take. Milligan conned his way into a doctor's office early one Sunday morning to shoot a hatpin abortion scene with Cino regular Maggie Dominic. When Dominic started screaming, residents in the building called the authorities. Suddenly, as Bazzini recalled, they were "surrounded by ten police cars!" Shooting a suicide scene in a local park led to more chaos. "The kid - dressed up in a West Point uniform - kept screaming, 'I'm gonna kill myself! I'm gonna kill myself!' This Con Ed crew putting up cable actually thought he was killing himself and came off the wires and ran after us. I kept yelling, 'There's a *camera*!'"

During the climax scene in which Maggie Rogers and her wheelchair get pushed down the stairs by Candy, Rogers nearly lost her life for real. Bazzini: "We lost control of the chair and she went directly into the wall! Yeah, Maggie was a real trouper."

Seeds is Milligan's *Magnificent Ambersons* - meaning that what exists of the film only frustrates after reading a nearly complete script. This was to be Andy's sickest masterwork yet. Carol (Candy Hammond) prances around naked and paws herself while gazing at muscle mags. Intent on resuming the sick relationship with her brother Matthew, she goes behind the back of her bitchy, alcoholic, wheelchair-bound mother, Claris (Maggie Rogers), to arrange a Christmas reunion. The family members all hate each other, and Mom throws a fit when she learns of Carol's plan. "You mark my words, you've destroyed us," she shrieks.

When the clan gathers, all the ills seep out. Everybody's trying to manipulate everybody else and they've all got secrets to hide: jealousy, infidelity, sadism, alcoholism, insanity, incest.

One major *Seeds* thread concerns Matthew (Neil Flanagan), a demented priest who not only brings his nymphomaniac girlfriend home but has molested his brother Buster, a troubled West Point cadet thrown out of school for "abnormal relations with another boy." "You ruined my life by

touching me - or don't you remember?" Buster screams at Matthew, then smashes the priest's rosary. [*The major scene missing from the script copy I have involves priest Matthew and girlfriend Barbara partaking in "a sacreligious love scene in the rectory."*]

Matthew is later seduced by Carol, but she turns on him after he asks her to "punish" him. "You degenerate! You filthy, no-good bastard! You call yourself a priest! Just look at yourself, groveling on the floor. Begging for a piece. You make me sick!" She then humiliates him by spitting in his mouth. One by one, members of the family are picked off by an unknown killer stabbed, poisoned, hung, and electrocuted by a radio falling into a bathtub.

By the end only Carol and Michael are left, and, after she's rebuffed by him, she turns to her mother, who exposes her as the killer. She pushes her mother's wheelchair down the stairs, killing her; then Michael rushes to the scene and strangles Carol in a frenzy. As the servant Mortimer calls the police, Michael is on the floor cradling his dead sister / lover, reverting to an infantile state, murmuring a nursery rhyme he once shared with her.

Treachery and deceit lurk everywhere in this barrel of crabs. "This whole family is sick. It would stop at nothing to get what they want," announces Claris as she burns a hundred-dollar bill out of spite. "The whole world revolves around this. Every sin you can think of comes back to this." "She'd murder for a dollar." "You can't stand the truth. It's like sunlight to your darkness." "Everyone here in this house is capable of murder, including you and I." "Nothing can kill a bitch like Mama." "I love you so much I could kill you." People don't talk in *Seeds*, they assault.

"I'm not sick, it's the world that's sick," cries Buster to his mother. "It's a terrible place to live. They know nothing but hatred and deceit. I try to go out to them with love and I get nothing in return. I ask for nothing more than you'd give a dog and I get kicked each time. Why is it, mother, that I can't have any peace?"

"You'll never have peace as long as you're alive," she hisses back, driving him to suicide with her taunts. Once again Mommy is the root of all evil.

"Hate is a dirty word, my dear," sneers the vitriol-consumed Claris.

"All my movies are about incest," the ever-provocative Fassbinder once muttered. It's certainly true of Milligan's work, with the theme never more blatant than in *Seeds*. Particularly creepy are the scenes between Carol and Michael, seducing each other while reciting nursery rhymes and baby talk: "I'll ride on your train if you'll play in my house." "You're my sister!" stutters Matthew as Carol comes on to him. "The whole world are [sic] brother and sister," she coos.

The Milligan regulars all rant away with great intensity, particularly Maggie Rogers as the malevolent matriarch. The requisite nonactors this go round include a pair of oily Brooklyn swingers playing the S&M duo Jonathan and Margaret, Gene Connelly as Buster ("some young kid that Andy picked up," said John Borske), and Staten Island antique dealer Jessie Bigelow as the eye-patched servant Mortimer. Borske marveled at Milligan's knack for seizing the right nonprofessionals - "Literally goin' down to the deli and pickin' up the people makin' the sandwiches. He'd run 'em into the room, drive 'em hard, and that would be it. Before they had a chance to be scared or think about what they were doin', he got a performance out of them."

Seeds was released in 1968. The campaign was sleazy genius, with a tag line that was pure Milligan - "Sown in Incest! Harvested in Hate!" Proud of his first motion picture, Bazzini, with his mother in tow, traveled to Philadelphia for opening night at the Studio Theater, a local porn house. "When we got there the distributor said, 'What am I gonna do with a picture called *Seeds*?' *Seeds of Sex* was too harsh, so we called it *Seeds of Sin*."

The picture made some loot but wasn't exactly a blockbuster. "We happened to come in when things were going color and that was a big problem," Bazzini lamented. "Harder" sex inserts were added that were obviously not shot by Andy - the people are too good-looking and the camera actually lingers over the sex. Key scenes were cut to accommodate the transplanted smut, and the result is a mess. *Seeds* has recently turned up on video in its mangled insert incarnation, *Seeds of Sin* (among other bits and pieces, all the scenes featuring priest Matthew have been excised, along with the last minutes of the ending).

For its New York City run Bazzini pleaded with Bingo Brandt to open the picture at the Rialto, but he dumped it at his second-run house the Bryant instead. *Seeds* ran for eight weeks, with Bazzini claiming that it was a big hit with Deuce denizens. "It was amazing to watch the reaction. I mean, to them it was a comedy."

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Somewhere in this period Milligan also worked on an unfinished picture entitled *Compass Rose*. Scripted by Joe Bush, it's something of a satire on the Cino / La Mama / Warhol crowd. While the idea of a nonexploitation Milligan film is an intriguing one, I rescued a reel of the picture from oblivion in the early nineties and have to say it's a complete disappointment. The script is full of far too many obscure in-jokes. The chief pleasure is a brief scene shot inside the Cino in all its glory, with downtown drag legend Minette doing a campy turn as Linda Darnell (assisted by Matt Baylor in his skivvies). Cinoites Kenny Burgess and Joe Davies also have bit parts, alongside Milligan stock players Annie Linden, Gerry Jacuzzo, Hal Borske, and Candy Hammond.

"It was incredible to film," said Matt Baylor. "We were all so optimistic. Andy trying not to use bad words!" Milligan disowned the picture.

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***COMPASS ROSE* IS A PIECE OF SHIT. Pretentious. Joe Bush - his mind is too intelligent to write. He'd use a Latin title. A takeoff on Ellen Stewart - Maggie Rogers in a Gestapo outfit saying, "You vill vatch the show." Joe picks on people. *Compass Rose* was never finished. Too snobbish.**

***Seeds* was patterned after the Bazzinis. Molly, Rozzili, and Allen. All terrible. The father was the headwaiter and they treated him like dirt. Imagine the father's dead ... they must've killed him. Oh, they were monsters, the three of them. The Flying Bazzinis. I got a buyout; I smelled trouble.**

I love *Seeds* - it's very theatrical. You take the worst of everybody - that makes good theater. Originally it was called *Incest*. Because it was *all* incest, the whole family. A nasty, money-grubbing family - a family of hatred. People would say, "Oh, the people are so nasty." But people are basically like that. We must strip away all the cotton candy. *Seeds* is the beginning of moral decay in America. Nobody is nice in it; nobody is sympathetic. Nobody. If you made *Seeds* now it would be a hit. It's exactly what people are today.

The abortion scene - Paul Eden and Maggie Dominic. We see the legs go up and he says, "This isn't gonna hurt." He takes a wire hanger, you hear her scream, cut to the next scene. Hee hee. Everything I've ever written, every seed comes from those early exploitation pictures. Susan Cassidy spits in Neil Flanagan's mouth! He's a masochistic priest. Neil loved that stuff. It's still taboo.

Spitting? That's theatricality. What's the epitome of sadism or masochism? Either a beating thing or spitting. What is degradation, what would you visually show?

There was an act in Tijuana when I was in the Navy. This is disgusting. There was this old Mexican man, and little girls - twelve, thirteen years old - would come out and shit on a plate. And this guy would eat it. Three shows a night. That was the act. And of course, in Cuba there was Superman exhibiting his cock, which was three feet long. What else is degradation but something like that?

Am I sadistic? No. Not really. No more than anybody else, hee hee. A lot of your leather people are masochists, not sadists. The sadists wear Florsheim shoes. They don't look it. They have briefcases and are very calm-looking - in a suit. They don't dress it, they *do* it.

Everybody's a bit sadistic at times - and masochistic. Look at the sex act alone. The male part is sadistic, the female is masochistic. The male *penetrates* them, they're masochistic to be penetrated - and they've been made by nature to be passively excited by that. The whole act of sex is sadism and masochism, basically. Penetration - an act of violence.

But what is theatricality in movies? What is exploitation? Killing, violence, murder, beating, blood, guts - we did that. Years ago. I'd rather do interesting studies of sick characters. The exploitation part of a movie is done so well now, you can't compete with it. When you're doing stuff like this you have to write the best screenplay you can for no money; when you're shooting you have to shoot the best you can for no money; when you edit you have to throw it all out if it doesn't work and get something in that does.

I never thought I'd live it down. I'd go into Cino, and Harry Koutoukas would say, "Here comes the porno king." You got that sort of shit. Bob Patrick used to do that all the time. When he'd introduce me to somebody on the street, he'd make a point-"Oh, hi, this is Andy, he's the porno king." Now I'm not known as that. I'm known as a horror filmmaker.

Did I see other exploitation films? Russ Meyer. Too glossy for me. I was always asked, "Why can't you turn out a film like Russ Meyer?" I said, "I wouldn't want to turn out a film like Russ Meyer." He's into beautiful broads and beautiful photography there's nothing there, no substance.

All exploitation films are woman-hating films. What is exploitation but?

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Seeds **was written for Candy. Candy's not an ordinary woman. She's self-made, always was. Left home at a young age. Candy would talk wild, act wild, but she's really a prude. Not about nudity - sex. She's afraid of men in a way.**

Candy was a natural. She never had any training. Not the best actress, but real natural. She just got up and did it. You'd say, "Go over there and say this," and she'd go over there and say it! That's what you need for the movies. Nothing sparkly, nothing "pretty girl," just natural. You tell her to file her nails and she would.

Candy is a Virgo. Virgos don't make enemies with anybody. Virgos are shopping bag people - drifters, gypsies. She'd work in the yard, and three weeks later the rake would still be there. That's a Virgo. They never finish projects. Wherever they go they leave their life.

Candy and I got along well, and one day I asked if she wanted to get married. It was convenience. I knew she was gonna go back home.

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The Milligans made a stab at married life at 7 Phelps Place. Andy tried to teach Candy to edit film. Candy was a good sport. She was bemused by Andy's attitude toward women. "He would see a woman dressed in pink and say, 'She's a bitch. I can tell you she's a bitch because only bitches wear pink. They're the kind you have to watch out for, a woman wearing pink. Because outside she'll look soft, but inside she's a bitch.'"

But sooner or later Andy would always turn, even on Candy. "I remember going to the movies and the girl said, 'How many?' And I said, 'Two.' And he just pitched a fit because I didn't let him answer. He wanted to control me. He thought women should be beautiful and submissive and the man should do it all.

"I didn't like being married. I didn't like livin' out in Staten Island. Sometimes I wouldn't come back for three days. I'd make plans to go canoeing - which Andy knew - and that very weekend he'd decide to invite business associates, and instead of me getting to go canoeing with my ol' pals, I'd end up havin' to cook for strangers. Now I suppose this is a wife's duty, but I didn't take it gracefully.

"Andy is one of the more talented men I have ever run across in my life, but that doesn't mean he was easy to live with. The man can do anything – I mean he's a carpenter, he can wire, he can decorate, he can upholster furniture. Unfortunately, he doesn't think that anyone else can do anything. So if you have an idea you don't even get to voice it, because it's already been decided. I remember my only input into the house on Staten Island was I got to pick the color of my own room."

The Candy / Andy union finally just faded away one day, and it happened to the tune of an auctioneer's gavel. "Last time I saw Andy we were on Greenwich Avenue," Candy recalled. "Gerry was there, Andy was there. There was some antique jewelry that I coveted.

"Andy said, 'I don't know if we'll get that or not - we need to pick out some furniture.' Well, I knew that 'we' pick out furniture did not mean me pick out furniture, it meant *he* would pick out furniture. We'd been sittin' there quite a while and I said, 'I'm really getting a little tired of this.' So I decided to go outside and take a little walk, get a cola, something like that. "It was a real pretty spring day. I took a walk in the neighborhood and it reminded me of an old boyfriend I hadn't seen in years and years. So I called him up and he had just moved to Woodstock and said I should come up and visit. So I went and it reminded me of North Carolina.

"I was fed up with New York. I was tired of the rat race, tired of the climate. ... I was certainly fed up with trying to be a wife. It was just time to move on. So I went back into the city and I left Andy a little note sayin', 'If you ever need me, I'll be in Farmer.' I packed my bags and went. And that was it."

Candy wasn't even sure if Andy noticed her departure. "Andy did not have to rely on people for emotional stability. The man was so busy. So wrapped up in what he was doing. He was always on the go."

Milligan would not stop moving. In 1969 and 1970 alone, he'd make nine films. One picture seeped right into the next, according to John Borske. "Over and over again - it became almost a madness."

PART III

LONDON, STATEN ISLAND, NYC

1969-1984

9

TRISEXUAL

Show the world you have lived ... show them your scars ... be proud of them ... exhibit yourself ... and for God's sake ... charge admission.

- EDUARD, IN MILLIGAN'S *COCTEAU*

"ANDY AND I HAD A DOZEN SCRAPS over our lifetime, but never anything that wasn't straightened out," said William Mishkin. But it was a different story with William's son Lew. The mere mention of Lew's name caused Andy to blow a gasket. Virtually nothing Milligan had to say about him is printable. Watching them go at it in 1987 on *Monstrosity*, their last picture together, some twenty years into their relationship, was awe-inspiring high opera - screaming matches, angry letters, slammed phones. By the end of the picture, Andy was threatening to pour gas on the negative and put a match to it.

Lew Mishkin entered the picture business just as the seventies began, and his arrival ushered in a new era for the Mishkins. "Lew and Will looked at the business from a very different point of view," said Straw Weisman, a former employee. "Will wanted to make and sell movies, Lew wanted to make and deposit money. Film is not his first love."

Lew joined his father's business after spending six months trying to make it as a lawyer. "My secretary was getting paid more than I was," he said. His first solo project for his father's company was a sobering experience. 1970's *Cowards* was a draft-dodger epic obviously intended to get the Mishkins out of the exploitation ghetto Lew so despised. "It didn't work out that way. Got a good review in the *Times*, that's all. It did virtually nothing. We cut out the politics, added some sex, changed the title to *Love-In*, and the first day on 42nd Street with no advertising it did fifty dollars less than two weeks at Carnegie Hall Cinema with advertising."

Lew got the message. He kept the Mishkins in the grindhouse, later becoming particularly adept at pushing kung fu imports. This didn't mean that he had any affection for the Mishkin product, particularly the Andy

Milligan pictures. While William took pride in his threadbare features, in Lew's era the actual movie didn't matter. "That was the weird thing - nobody watched the picture," said former employee Jim Wheelock. "As Lew said, 'How could I sell this stuff if I watched it?'"

Father and son Mishkin - what a combo. William was soft-spoken; Lew was a screamer. Lew was raw and heavyset; his father thin and dapper. William loved an hour-long anecdote; Lew was brusque. Their rows were legendary, and the Mishkins' tiny office at 1501 Broadway was often a battlefield. "I don't know how many times I quit, I don't know how many times he fired me," said Lew's secretary, Mary Temkin. [*At the time Mary Temkin worked there, Mishkin's office was staffed by "three very fat people. ... I still don't know how we all managed to physically fit in there." Andy Milligan's nightmare - a fat movie company.*]

"Lew is someone who has said, 'I'm leaving and I'm never coming back' more than once - to his father, to the business, and to himself," said Straw Weisman. "But he never really meant any harm. In my experience, Lew's a fair guy. His bark is worse than his bite."

Most often Lew barked at his father. "It was sometimes *unbelievable*," said Weisman, reporting that the father-son battles took place "twice a day, like clockwork. The morning show and afternoon show." They argued about everything: business, family inheritance, even the movies they saw together. "The Siskel and Ebert of 42nd Street," Weisman dubbed them.

Mary Temkin alleged that the animosity was rooted in sibling rivalry between Lew and his brother, Neil, a successful banker. "Neil was the favorite; Lew was not. Neil was the fair-haired boy, and Lew was always the disappointing one." Temkin went on to say that everybody in the Mishkin clan squabbled, a la an Andy Milligan film. "Nobody I ever met in the Mishkin family was particularly happy. Lew was not a happy man; Will was not a happy man; the mother was not a happy woman."

At any rate, Lew seemed to have a particular conflict with William. "It was a real drag to see Lew berate his father," said Weisman. "It was extreme. It was 'Who's in charge.'" Lew would become more and more in charge in the

seventies, and it would drive Andy Milligan completely around the bend. What exactly was it between them? "Andy was a prima donna and, unfortunately, so is Lewis to a certain extent," offered William Mishkin.

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By 1969, sexploitation was limping toward extinction. The advent of hardcore pornography changed everything. Loops, the short, frequently unplotted crudities made up of little more than graphic nudity and sex, which began popping up in San Francisco peep show booths circa 1967, had become widespread, while feature product like 1969's *I Am Curious (Yellow)* and 1970's *Mona* - the first well-known American hardcore feature - made Mishkin's brand of promise-them-anything-but-show-them-nothing obsolete overnight. [*Some feel that sexploitation "evolved" into the sort of R-rated drive-in teen comedy product that flourished in the seventies with such films as* The Van, Swingin' Cheerleaders*, and hundreds of others. This sort of product would itself mutate into such raunchy mainstream fare as 1981's* Porky's *and 1999's* American Pie. *"These sacrosant big studios studied all the indie pictures and they made them on bigger budgets so you couldn't compete," said producer Sam Sherman*.]

I Am Curious (Yellow), a rather dull "educational" Grove Press documentary imported from Sweden (the Danes had legalized pornography in 1968) and notable for shots of oral sex and a semierect penis, was seized by U.S. Customs and declared obscene after a lengthy federal trial. The decision was overturned on appeal, when it was decided that the film presented its ideas "artistically" and was protected by the First Amendment. "The ultimate importance of this sour, uncharitable movie about the quality of contemporary Swedish life is that it changed the standards of acceptability in an industry that was inching toward the presentation of explicit sex," wrote Turan and Zito."Pornography was beginning to be more widely seen and even somewhat fashionable."

When the 1970 Alex De Renzy documentary *Sexual Freedom in Denmark* played Chellee Wilson's theaters - the first Times Square picture to "show penetration" according to Phil Todaro - the novelty attracted packed houses. Former softcore maven Wilson advertised the picture on TV and increased

admissions to five bucks. Whatever shame she might have felt about distributing "the harder stuff" was undoubtedly assuaged by the loot she took in. "That's what kept the limos rollin' round the corner, so how embarrassed could you be?" said Todaro.

But the hardcore market would quickly be glutted - at least for a while, seemingly anyone could make a fuck film - and a new kind of business partner was introduced in the process. "There was no money in it," said Lee Hessel. "Houses had switched to flat rate rentals and the mafioso types owned them. They sort of blossomed with *Deep Throat*. I just couldn't see getting killed." [*David Friedman scoffed when asked about mob involvement in pornographic features. "The FBI for years claimed porno was run by the Mafia, run by organized crime. Hell, if that's the case, then I have to be the biggest godfather of all, because I ran the Adult Film Association for years. Out of seven hundred some odd theatres that were playing soft X, five hundred of them became explicit houses. Maybe twenty of them - at the most - may have been operated by people whose names end in a vowel."*]

The bombshell 1972 release *Deep Throat* changed the rules of the game. Suddenly porno became a mainstream fascination, and the Mafia got involved in hardcore. Gerard Damiano ground the picture out on twenty five Gs for Louie "Butchie" Peraino, a scary figure whose family had ties to the Columbo family, and who supplied the flow of peep show loops in Times Square. Via the Perainos' distribution outfit, Bryanston - and later home video - *Deep Throat* reportedly grossed $100 million, making it the most successful independent picture of all time.

Bryanston would also distribute *Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Andy Warhol's Frankstein* - and Andy Milligan's *Blood*. The Perainos were understandably feared. Legend has it that Damiano was forced to sell his interest in *Deep Throat* at gunpoint to Louie Peraino for $25 thousand. When a *New York Times* reporter inquired why he'd made such a bad deal, Damiano replied, "You want me to get both my legs broken?"

The Mishkins did not take the plunge into hardcore. Why? "Cowardice," Lew admitted. "We never had any films prosecuted. We were always a bit

behind the times - intentionally. Play it safe." William actually had a shot at *Deep Throat* but passed, then watched as distributor Sam Lake, who'd taken over the World Theatre from Felix Bilgrey, raked in the dough.

"Everybody knew it was a great film, everybody knew it would do great business, but I felt you could get into trouble." *Deep Throat*, along with *I Am Curious* and a host of others, would be subject to endless legal hassles. "Whenever something was likely to have trouble, I just stepped away from it. Very frankly, I would not take the chance. Y'know - things might happen. I didn't regret not getting in - I regretted that it came. Because obviously that made the rest of the business tough."

Now that the softcore jig was up, the Mishkins turned to "gore" - horror films, usually with a bit of nudity, but concentrating on bloody, extreme violence. The genre got its start in 1963 with Herschell Gordon Lewis's entrail-laden, vividly chartreuse, intentionally crass disembowelment epic *Blood Feast*, a picture cooked up when Lewis and producer David Friedman scrawled a list of shocking subjects the majors wouldn't touch (and that Lewis and Friedman hadn't yet done) - and settled upon one word: gore.

The publicity-shy Mishkin went so far as to trumpet his change in direction to *Variety* in December 1969. His new company, pointedly christened Constitution Films, was soon responsible for such Milligan mania as *Torture Dungeon, Bloodthirsty Butchers*, and *The Man with Two Heads*.

A new ingredient to picture-making circa 1968 was the Motion Picture Association of America ratings system, which aimed to curb public outcry over increasingly daring product, and replaced an ineffectual Production Code and extinct state censorship boards. Pictures were now labeled "G," "PG'" "M'" "R," or "X'" "X" being the kiss of death for anything outside the porno netherworld (Milligan's first Mishkin horror pies would require minor cuts in order to achieve "R" ratings). Somewhat by default, Lew became a member of the all-powerful MPAA. "They needed some legitimacy from the independents," he said. "I was like the one black member of the country club." [*There were those who felt that the ratings system was used by major studios as a harrassment tool against independent producers. "Ratings*

came in when indies were making a great deal of money and there was no censorship," said Sam Sherman, who maintained you had to play ball in order to stay in business. "Any picture not rated was automatic 'X.' No National Association of Theater Owners member could play 'X' pictures. It was a sweetheart deal."]

As an MPAA member, Lew quickly learned how the ratings game was played. Violence was OK, but sex a no-no. "There used to be a joke," Lew said. "A single-frame exposure of a bare nipple was an automatic R, unless somebody was chopping it off, in which case it was a PG."

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"To achieve harmony in bad taste is the height of elegance," said Jean Genet. It's a pity he didn't see Andy's first Constitution film - the unbelievable *Torture Dungeon*, a medieval horror picture shot on the so-called beaches of Staten Island. Released in 1970 but shot over a year earlier, this was Milligan at his most unhinged, and it may be my favorite Andy picture of all time.

Imagine a drug-induced riot taking place in one of those unbearable Ye Olde Renaissance Faires, throw in a bunch of thespians equal parts thug and fairy (plus a hyperactive hunchback that resembles Moe Howard's illegitimate offspring), add sex with the mentally disadvantaged, not to mention nude romps through acrid, rust-colored ponds that look suspiciously like overflow from Staten Island sewage centers, and then stick Andy in the middle of it all with his Tourette's Syndrome camera - Voila! *Torture Dungeon*! And torture there certainly is: whippings, snakebites, death by pitchfork, and stake through the heart (although a man-to-hunchback smooch has been snipped from all prints I've seen).

Rarely has Cap'n Andy created such a compellingly crazy alternate universe. In yet another very convoluted "evil family" scenario, Hal Borske (in a blond pageboy wig) plays Alfred, the nose-picking, brain-dead heir to the throne. Poor Alfred is to marry Heather MacGregor (Susan Cassidy) in a family-arranged union, and the bride-to-be is counseled by the royal odd balls - mainly a hammy old character actress (get this: Andy couldn't even

remember this unforgettable creature's name, where she came from, or even filming her) dolled up in an outlandish Milligan get-up that makes her look like a human Pez dispenser. While shooting the marriage ceremony the $1.98 costumes slithered off a kneeling Borske and Cassidy the minute Andy screamed, "Cut!," leaving the pair standing buck naked before cast and crew. "If you saw all the bobby pins that were holding us together!" said Borske. "We stood up and our costumes fell off!" The movie's so deranged that had this moment been included in the finished film one wouldn't even blink.

Torture Dungeon is stolen by Gerry Jacuzzo (dubbed Jerremy [sic] Brooks in the credits). Sporting a black Prince Valiant wig, Jacuzzo plays the Duke of Norwich with a haughty queenliness, frequently dabbing his brow with a yard-long orange chiffon scarf - when he's not convulsed in some epileptic fit. The amoral Duke is Milligan's mouthpiece, a hedonistic alter ego. His wife enters their bedroom to find a hunchback ensconced under the covers of their marital bed. She confronts the Duke over his blatant affair, but he is unfazed, soon bullying both of them into bed to do as he bids. "I'm not a homosexual, I'm not a heterosexual, I'm not asexual," leers the Duke, a crooked, malevolent smile upon his lips. "I'm trisexual ... I'll try anything ... for pleasure!" [*Did Milligan find amusement in such over-the-top dialogue? "No," said Jacuzzo, sighing. "He was always serious about that stuff."*]

Just about all the Milliganites parade through this one, including Neil Flanagan, Matt Baylor, and Maggie Rogers. The actor playing Ivan the hunchback disappeared in the middle of shooting after being pummeled, whipped, and painted. "I think that's why Ivan didn't come back," insisted John Borske, laughing. "He realized he was that close to death - and that Milligan was willing to *kill* him just to get the fuckin' film."

Andy rounded out the cast with a bunch of Staten Island nonactors possessing the worst (and most nonmedieval) accents ever, particularly a "dese, dem, and dose" duo playing the medieval potentates Andy inexplicably dubbed Peter the Ear and Peter the Nose (an eye-patched Neil Flanagan was Peter the Eye). The locals were swept away by the promise of stardom until they actually saw the film. "They were a bunch of lower-class Italians who owned hardware stores," recalled Matt Baylor. "They wanted

to strangle Andy. They were gonna lynch him, I swear to God. He stayed away from Staten Island for about a month."

The most unforgettable amateur was a nameless, well-built hunk of male flesh referred to in Cinaka as the Horse Ella, due to his supplying a couple of steeds for the shoot. Nearly nude in loincloth, tights, and Beatle wig, he mutters his lines in a Brooklynese deadpan reminiscent of the Ramones. "He did one picture in his life - Milligan," scoffed Baylor. "And the loincloth didn't do any good, either." Hal Borske had a scene where he was stabbed by the Horse Ella, and by the end of it he was fearing for his life. "That one was dangerous. One day he was telling us how he came back from Vietnam. He jumped up on the table and gives us this whole thing about killing gooks."

Poor Gerry Jacuzzo was terrified of his horse. As Baylor remembered, "Andy practically picked him up by the seat of his pants and plopped him on it." Ken Hill recalled that actress Patti Dillon got so furious with Milligan doing shot after shot of her in the saddle she "tried to run him down with the horse, which Andy liked - he finally got the shot he wanted."

For wardrobe, Milligan tended to use couch upholstery material - the heaviest, most uncomfortable fabric possible. "The costumes in *Torture Dungeon* - that was the *real* torture," said Dillon. Of course Milligan had no money for transportation to his obscure Staten Island locations. Borske remembered seeing the entire lot of medieval misfits "standing at the bus station in these fuckin' costumes. They said, 'We tried to hitch a ride, but nobody would pick us up.' "

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"Will you shut up about your fucking mother?" is the theme song of Milligan's supreme attack on Mommy, *The Bitch*. Andy wrote it after seeing a girl in a West Village diner get hauled off by the police in the throes of an epileptic fit that occurred after she put Streisand's "People" on the jukebox. Milligan shot *The Bitch* as a feature, but problems with the Auricon's focus ruined the footage.

Rachel and Carolyn are in a 42nd Street greasy spoon when a lost waif named Jo succumbs to a seizure. The two women take Jo in, but she begins to manipulate them both. Jo's behavior turns more and more threatening. She tries to kiss the two women and at one point puts on a dog collar, curling up on the floor to suck her thumb. Every bizarre behavior trait somehow connects to memories of her dead mother. Jo lies to the landlord, steals from the neighbors, and seduces a married man. Finally she stabs someone in a fit and the two women demand she leave, but not before Jo can reveal the depths of depravity to which her relationship with her mother sank. "My mama and I would sleep together ... and mama would kiss me ... kiss me on the mouth...." "Your mother's a bitch!" shouts Carolyn, throwing her out into the street. Jo runs into traffic, screaming "Mama, Mama" as she kills herself.

Milligan would restage *The Bitch* as a play more than a few times in the seventies and eighties, and playwright Donald Kvares was mesmerized by it. "His insight into the way women relate to each other is unbelievably accurate. The jealousy of each other's boyfriends, the kind of camaraderie, the way they perceive evil in people.

"Andy's got a scene in *The Bitch* - the girl is sitting at the piano and she suddenly falls into a nervous fit and all the chords go wrong - it's one of the most extraordinary moments in theater I've ever seen," said Kvares, who attended the play sometime in the early seventies. "The whole idea that here's a girl who might be far more talented and sensitive than anyone is able to see - including herself - gives her an incredible poignancy." The rather passionate identification with the raw emotions of three very female characters - it all betrays Andy's sputtering, muttering declarations of woman hatred. What a pity *The Bitch* no longer exists.

The Weirdo, another lost film shot around this time (Andy would remake the picture decades later), was the male counterpart to *The Bitch*. This damaged "innocent" was incapable of manipulation and only turned murderous when besieged by meddling females.

***

THE SIMPLER THE PERSON IS, the easier it is to live life. The more primitive and ignorant people are, the happier they are. The more you learn, the more you're gonna be miserable.

***The Weirdo* was quite nice. Melinda Dockery played the girl; Michael St. Shaw – a rock star, a good actor - played Willie. The locals make him play "doggie," ride him. He's retarded - he doesn't look retarded, but he is - and he goes out to the beach with this great big gunnysack and picks up all these things, brings them back to his basement. The old aunt lets him stay in the basement. Turns out her sister screwed around with her brother and that's how Willie came out. Incest thing.**

So Willie meets this girl. The girl's crippled; she has one leg. One day they're standing there under this bridge at Hurbridge Crossing - it's a very poor, depressed area, everybody's in rags, a wonderful shot - and she says, "Hi, my name's Jennie, what's yours?" And they get to be friends.

So one day they're sent to the church. Maya Reid plays this big nun. "Oh Jennie that's a sweet name. You know Willie's not *normal*. Did he ever try anything? You better be careful." Jennie said, "No, he wouldn't do anything like that! You're talking *dirty*. All you got is *him* up there" - she points to the cross. Willie comes in at that point "What did you say?" - and he shoves her. He gets so upset he starts rocking. Beats the nun to death on the altar, tee hee. Beaten to death with a crucifix.

Later on Jennie sets Willie up. "He tried to molest me." She gets all the dregs of the neighborhood to beat him to death at the end. That picture was completed.... I don't know what happened to it.

*****

I love horror films. All the early Frankenstein and Dracula pictures, the ones that came out in the thirties - all the James Whale. One of the best ones for German Impressionistic sets is *Son of Frankenstein*. Wonderful abstract sets, all the camera tilts. One of the best of all. That's before he started becoming just a monster, still had the human soul. The

monster's body and the human soul. The real Mary Shelley story was of this creature that was trapped, and the first three films are that. *M* is brilliant. *Freaks, Cat People* - Simone Simon! God, does that scare the hell out of ya. The scariest film you ever saw.

Torture Dungeon **- Staten Island looks like the coast of England, doesn't it? That's under Mt. Loretta in Tottenville, the southernmost point in Staten Island. We didn't look like we were making a film. That's the secret of doing nonunion. I never advertise anything.**

Hal is wonderful in *Torture Dungeon*; Gerry is great. The body with a hood who couldn't act, couldn't talk - had a nice torso. Never acted in his life. He got us the horses, so he became a movie star. Tee hee.

***

At some point in 1968, Andy threw the Auricon into a suitcase and headed for London. A wealthy, very supportive young English swinger by the name of Leslie Elliot wanted Milligan to make films for a chain of theaters he owned called the Compton Cinema Club. These tiny, low-ceilinged venues, which operated via a clever mirror-based rear-projection scheme, showed uncensored films to its members. "I used to buy about fifty pictures a year. The only film there was ever a real problem with was *Salo*." Elliot had also coproduced a few films, most notably Polanski's *Cul-de-Sac*. And so Milligan entered into a deal for three pictures a year for five years for Elliot's Cinemedia Films. It looked like Andy was free of the Mishkins at last.

In England, Milligan put together a band of movie misfits every bit as unique as their American counterparts. William Barrel, Graham Steane, and two Australian girls - Susan and Judith Heard - served as crew members and sometime actors. John Borske, the only other American making the trip, would reach his limit with Milligan's temper and antiwoman harangues and flee right after the first picture. [*Borske's defection still seemed to disturb Milligan decades later, because he brought it up a few times. "John Borske used to idolize me when we first became associated. Then he saw the chinks in my armor ... it's a Cancer quality. They put everybody around them on*

pedestals, and when they find out they have feet of clay, they pull back ... I could never understand why he suddenly became cold to me."]

Later Milligan summoned both Hope Stansbury and Gerry Jacuzzo over to act in one picture each. Jacuzzo recalled that Manson was splashed across the headlines as they arrived in August 1969. Milligan was living in a Soho flat at the time - number 6, 58 Dean Street. [*Milligan had a rather unusual neighbor at 58 Dean - a "stab queen." "He liked to be literally stabbed," said John Borske, who remained skeptical until the guy wound up one night getting viciously attacked. Apparently he'd usually get stabbed just a couple of times, "but this time he got stabbed a lot and ended up in the hospital. I thought to myself, 'Jesus, how do you say stab me just a little?'" One has to wonder if Andy was involved.*] "Dean Street wasn't such a great street - a lot of topless dancing places, striptease places," said Stansbury. "His movies were playing there at the time - *Depraved* and *Filthy Five*. I couldn't believe it."

First and foremost among the new company players was Berwick Kaler, who would star in four of the five epics Milligan made overseas. Kaler had one of those unforgettable mugs that only Andy Milligan would dare exalt to the silver screen. With his dirty blond combover and sideburns, prominent snout and heavy-lidded, lost-in-a-bad-dream eyes, Kaler resembles a dazed marsupial sorry to be caught in the light of day. Gawky, morose, and perpetually adolescent, he's a preposterous choice for a lead. He's also astoundingly real and fascinating to watch. I'm sure Milligan found his eccentric countenance beautiful - he manages to slip nude shots of Kaler into two of his features.

The first film Andy shot in England was one he scribbled down on the plane coming over - *Nightbirds*, a moody relationship study that was to be Andy's last black and white film. "He made it all pretty well in one room," said Leslie Elliot. Berwick Kaler was a last-minute surprise. "We originally picked a guy and a girl out of the actor's book," said John Borske, who recalled that the original lead quit after a day with Milligan. The next day Andy showed up with Berwick Kaler.

Shown only once commercially, *Nightbirds* is one of Andy's more muted, unusual creations. Shot in very spartan black and white, the movie allowed Milligan to explore a more subtle sort of hysteria, much of it due to the physical limitations of the single-room hovel it was for the most part shot in. One sad couple, Andy, and the Auricon, shoe-horned into a cramped and dilapidated London flat. *Nightbirds*' pace is anything but frenetic. The swirl camera is for once mostly calm, and the result is a dreamy, somber meditation on romantic obsession. A truly sick second feature for Milligan's picture would be William Wyler's 1965 British film version of John Fowles's *The Collector*. *Nightbirds* is essentially the same story, but with the genders reversed.

Nightbirds opens with the homeless ragamuffin Dink vomiting on the street. Dee, a striking but haunted blonde, rushes over to help him. A twenty-year-old virgin who's just flown the coop from his "extremely dominant" mother, Dink moves into Dee's squalid top floor walkup, and so begins their malevolent romance. Dee seduces the impassive Dink, although her advances unnerve him. Dink lies as still as a corpse as she has her way. Their intimacies deepen the bond between them, but the more they reveal to each other, the more things begin to unravel.

Dink is jealous of Dee's relationship with her lecherous landlord, Ginger; Dee meddles with Dink's friendship with a daffy old maid. Milligan's portrayal of heterosexuality grows more and more masochistic. Dink, of course, is the innocent while Dee is a black widow determined to devour her prey. At one point Dee stands unimpressed as a trembling Dink sinks to his knees to satisfy her with his mouth. Servicing a woman orally is the ultimate degradation in Milligan's world.

They venture out of their nest to steal a blanket, but Dink is caught and gets beaten up by the shopkeeper. The couple play an obsessive game of "worship" on the rooftop of Dee's fiat, but Dink becomes self-conscious, throwing Dee into a rage. The tone grows more and more desperate. "That proves you love me," says Dink of Dee's jealousy. "Let's not grow up," says Dee. She breaks the neck of a wounded pigeon Dink has taken in. Dee turns on Dink, demanding that he leave.

Shattered, he stumbles up to the rooftop to find the mangled pigeon, then falls to his death. The final shot of the film shows another poor unfortunate trudging down the street with his garbage-bag belongings. "Can I help you?" coos Dee, moving in on a new victim.

In addition to Berwick Kaler's singular presence, *Nightbirds* benefits from the exceeding eccentricity of Julie Shaw as the predatory blonde. Although there are the usual laughably false Milligan moments, the intimate, melancholy mood gets under the skin. Andy manages to capture the weird and claustrophobic spaces that relationships invariably fall into. A very paranoid Dink and Dee - emerging from their apartment for the first time in days - huddle together as they trundle down the street, staring apprehensively at passersby. "I feel uncomfortable," gulps Dee. It registers. They look like a pair of escaped zoo animals longing for the comfort of a cage.

When it came time for Dee's pivotal pigeon-killing scene, Julie Shaw flatly refused. So did John Borske. "I said, 'No, thanks - *I*'m not tearing the head off a pigeon.' And so Andy had no choice - he tore the head off. And he screamed when he tore the head off. But he did it too quick, we didn't get the shot. Andy said, 'I'm not gonna tear the head off *another fucking pigeon*!'"

***

THIS GIRL WOULDN'T TWIST THE NECK OF A PIGEON. Nobody would. That's the whole crux of the film-where Dink reaches for his pet pigeon Homer and falls off the roof. He's a kid who's in the streets, and she turns him on to sex and says, "People are no good." She gets rid of all his friends, then goes about destroying him. She calls him a faggot and a queer and says, "Get out of here." [*Unfortunately, this key bit of dialogue (and a few others) are cut from the only known extant print of* Nightbirds.]

Then she's back out on the street at the end, looking at a twelve-year-old, and she reaches down - "Can I help you?" And the picture freezes, hee hee. A moral vampire.

It's theatrical, really. At the end I cop out with the call to the mother. It turns out the guy Dee married when she was eighteen had syphilis and didn't let her know. She scraped her ovaries and couldn't have children. You find out she went through all this shit and that's why she hates men.

Love is worship. That's basically what love is, but then it gets misinterpreted. Worshipping goes anywhere from a Polaroid - hee, hee - on up to actual worship, depending on what kind of actual station you have in life - upper class, lower class. Nobody fucks better than lower class. Upper class do it with sugar tongs. Everybody has street in them. They should have the Plaza and the street in them - or they shouldn't be known.

It's really a little sick, *Nightbirds*. I liked it when I made it, but saw it a couple of years ago and I didn't. It's very infantile now, extremely infantile ... *Nightbirds* upset Leslie Elliot. Leslie hated it because he was a weakling with women and he turned white watching it. He hated the damn film 'cause it was Leslie - I didn't write it that way, it just turned out that way. I made it up as we went along. Very strange, very Pinter. All I have is an answer print. Movielab ran up a bill on me and before I knew it they sold the negative.

Berwick was very quiet. A very nice person. Always knew his lines. Julie Shaw was strange. Had an accent, a little lisp. She was like a street person. She'd never tell me anything, I could never find out exactly where she was coming from ... It made Berwick uncomfortable.

***Nightbirds* - that's the way England is after eleven o' clock. First week I was there I did research. I went out and talked to the kids in Piccadilly. I hung out in the square, found out all about the English in about four days. Hang out with the street people, that's how you find out about any country. You don't go to the libraries, you go to the street corners, the dives, with the bums and the street peddlers. You go to the black section, the poor section, the Times Square. That's where you see the story.**

And I found out how the Irish, the Indians, and anybody who isn't English is looked down upon in England - Americans especially. They're afraid of Americans. I found out all about the underbelly of England by talking to the kids. They'd say, "Oh, the bobbies, those bastards - if you're out after eleven o'clock they shake you down, take your money." 'Cause nobody's out after eleven. England is really awful. It hasn't changed since Shaw's time. Nothing is civilized. It depends on which way the wind blows who has the upper hand. You rebel against society because you see how sick society really is. It's rotten to the core.

The English are such professionals. They come in and do their work. They never argue, never discuss. They do exactly what you tell them to do. I didn't have one bastard English, not one. Bay White, a wonderful character actress, played the mother in *Nightbirds*. Oh, I loved that woman. She got £40 a day, $150. It had rained the day before and she was in this beautiful pink suit. And the garden was muddy as hell and she ran, fell flat on her ass. And she said, "That's all right - I'll just turn the skirt around." What a lady she was.

There was this woman who came to the *Nightbirds* screening and she pursued me for months - I guess she thought I was into "M" or something. Oh, this woman used to call me at four A.M., wait outside doors. Weird. A strange thing with long, stringy, dirty hair, looked like Elvira or something. Very sick girl. She was obsessed with me. Very mentally disturbed, insanely jealous if you even talked to a waiter. It was unpleasant. Male relationships are stronger than male / female. Females are very possessive. That doesn't work with any artist, being possessive ... I really don't care to remember that much about it. She went off to Switzerland with her parents.

One thing about England. For a pound you can get a dozen long-stemmed roses, year-round.

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"SEXUALLY RAMPANT GHOULS, DEPRAVED SOULS ... AND BLOOD-RED ROSES!" wailed the tag line for Milligan's second picture

under the Cinemedia aegis, *The Body Beneath*. The plot concerns a group of vampires on a recruiting rampage to strengthen their bloodline. This was Milligan's first somewhat orthodox horror picture, but beneath the polished surface lurks the usual weirdness - hunchbacks on fire, death by knitting needle, cannibalism.

The lavish Hempstead Heath estate (also used for Andy's *The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!*, not to mention such big-budget fare as the 1968 Liz Taylor / Mia Farrow shocker *The Secret Ceremony*) was a dream locale for Milligan's wrought-iron sensibilities, [*Andy was very fond of recounting the story of a murder that took place not far from the estate grounds - "Guy nailed to a tree, bled to death all night. In leather, S&M. Bled to death! Ecstasy, hee hee."*

At times I got the distinct feeling Milligan was insinuating that he had something to do with the affair, although when pressed for details he immediately clammed up. Interestingly enough, there is a scene in The Body Beneath *in which Berwick Kaler is nailed to a tree and left to suffer*.] and for once there seemed to be a few extra bucks on hand for Andy to do his thing.

The gather-at-dusk vampire convention features some of his most ornate and original costumes, and - using only a greased lens, a couple pieces of tacky music, and the somber bong of a church bell - Milligan creates a very eerie and atmospheric bacchanalian feast.

Gavin Reed (who was to appear alongside a bewigged Dustin Hoffman in 1982's *Tootsie*) is perfect as the sneering, haughty Reverend who also happens to be head vampire. Both Heard sisters are memorable - Susan as the Reverend's whispering, compulsive-knitter wife, and Judith as an agitated vampire who confronts the Reverend during the feast. Best of all are a trio of mute, green-faced harpies swathed in neon-colored dresses who creepy crawl in and out of shots like creatures from a Murnau film accidently shot in comic-book color.

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Although the arrangement with Leslie Elliot was for five years, *The Body Beneath* would be Milligan's last picture for Cinemedia. At some point during the filming bad blood developed between Andy and Leslie Elliot's very wealthy father, Curtis, who routinely meddled in his son's affairs. Curtis Elliot was "very jealous of anyone trying to come into the family. He took a great dislike to Andy after the first two pictures," said lawyer Robin Gregg. "Curtis threw Leslie out of the company and called Andy everything under the sun."

"It was really a row my father was having with me," Leslie Elliot explained. "He did control the shares of the company I was running, but not the one Andy was involved in. I was operating it, and I thought I was in control - and I found I wasn't. He was interfering with a lot of things. Andy said, 'I've dealt with far worse types of people and I know your type from New York City and I've never been fazed by your type.' And my father took that as an anti-Semitic attack."

"Andy's accusations were like a red rag to a bull – I think he tried to grab Andy by the throat," recalled Gregg. "It was very, very nasty. Andy was furious. He retaliated by accusing Curtis of smuggling money out of England. Curt went for Andy's throat and Andy threw him across a desk. Andy could've been arrested for that. Curtis is a very nasty person. Unfortunately, he's also a very wealthy person." [*Andy Milligan: "We had a real screaming match. I decked him in the office. You've never seen me get my dander up - I can kill.* I would've *killed him if they hadn't come in. He said, 'I'll sue you!' And I said, 'Yeah, I'll bring your five passports into court!' He said, 'Get out! Take your films with you - go, go,* go!*' And I did. He said, 'You Americans, you're the scum of the earth! Religious fanatics, pimps, prostitutes ...'" Milligan gave the rant to one of the vampires at the end of* Body Beneath*. "That monologue was Curt talking."*]

Stuck in England, out of work and no doubt out of money, what did Andy do? Call the Mishkins. He squeezed out three more pictures for them during the remainder of his overseas stay. The first was *Bloodthirsty Butchers*, Andy's gore-soaked retelling of Sweeney Todd.

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Bloodthirsty Butchers is Milligan's bleakest, most brutal film. [*Milligan disliked* Bloodthirsty Butchers*, finding it "very claustrophobic, it doesn't have quality to it ... the reason you work so close in low budget is there's no sets, you can't show anything."*] Extremely contrasty and harsh, it has a particularly unsavory look, like a home-movie snuff film from the turn of the century. The scheming and screaming never stop. It opens with barber Sweeney Todd engaging in innocuous banter with the customer in his chair. When Todd notices the valuable ring adorning his finger, he blandly pulls the shade, cuts his victim's throat, chops off his hand and then finger, all to get the ring. Such is the on-the-make world of the *Bloodthirsty Butchers*.

Todd is having a torrid affair with Mrs. Lovett, a cold, calculating bitch famous for her meat pies, which, unbeknownst to her customers, contain the remains of the "258 people" she and Todd - aided by Tobias, a psychopath plagued by his conniving pregnant girlfriend, Rosie - have chopped up over the years. When Rosie tells Tobias she intends to have their baby - "That's the only hold I have on you" - he suddenly turns amorous, promising her a romantic vacation if she'll only write a note explaining her sudden absence. "I want you to remember this moment, Rosie, for the rest of your life," he says, plunging a knife into her body.

Literally everyone gets snuffed save for Joanna and Jarvis, a cardboard couple at the center of the nightmare whose expressions of passion for each other seem plucked off Hallmark greeting cards. (Andy's happy heterosexuals are perhaps his most unbelievable creations.) *Butchers* even sports a ghoulish "happy" ending, with the lovebirds contemplating a trip to America as one of the chattering womenfolk honors them with a gift of – what else? - a meat pie.

The film's cruelty is exemplified by a very funny scene in which a housewife reels off the daily gossip to her indifferent husband. "Just shut up and serve the meal!" he moans. She cuts into one of Mrs. Lovett's legendary pastries to find a female breast complete with nipple inside. The movie parades one grotesque woman after another - clucking, gossiping, conniving.

John Miranda is superb as the very bloodthirsty and amoral Sweeney Todd. Gangly and craggy with a wry, unsettling grin, Miranda is a deranged Abe Lincoln minus the beard, and a perfect mouthpiece for Milligan's anti female rants: "Women can't stand happiness for more than three days at a time. It drives them wild. So you have to know when to upset things before they do. And then - you forgive them, you screw them, and you watch out for the next three days!" After dispensing this advice to one of his hapless customers, he and henchman Tobias stab him, then take his jewels.

The most riotous scenes in the film take place backstage in a music hall complete with player-piano shanties on the rinky-dink soundtrack (this sub plot was added back in America when Mishkin bitched that the film was fifteen minutes too short). Susan Cassidy is classic as a makeup-caked trollop swathed in a flimsy see-through black "dress," filing her nails as she spews forth venom. The hard-boiled dialogue and attitude are straight out of some old Hollywood potboiler, a la Barbara Stanwyck in *Baby Face*.

The music hall owner pushes her around until he's revealed to be the real masochist in this unholy pairing. She belittles him, commanding him to "worship" her, then spits in his mouth. He exits and Sweeney Todd - the one man cruel enough to dominate her - enters. They have violent sex until the owner barges in to confront them. Todd and the owner fight until a booze-faced drag queen named Corky breaks it up. Total mayhem!

Bloodthirsty Butchers was shot in seven days for, as John Miranda put it, "thirty-nine cents and a box of green stamps." Miranda had met Milligan years before when both were cast in a Gillette commercial. He simply couldn't believe it when Andy called to invite him overseas to star in a horror movie. Miranda soon found himself in London without preparation or rehearsal, taking a razor to a customer's throat in what would be the film's first scene.

"Andy is filming away, and I take the razor and cut the guy's throat – and I went, 'Uhhh!' Andy said, 'Cut! Cut!' It scared the hell out of me, I'm sorry! He said, 'Awwww, now we gotta do it all over, clean up the blood ... Now don't be frightened *when you cut somebody's throat*!' From then on I got the hang of it.

"I thought this was all madness, it was ridiculous, nobody's ever gonna go see this and he's not gonna be able to sell it - and here I am with my head split open, holding the axe by the handle, blood was dripping down and Andy was saying, 'Good! Good!'" Miranda shook his head at the memory. "When it played on Broadway I had to stand in line."

***

The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! is by far the weakest effort from Milligan's English sojourn. Featuring another crazy family plagued by dark secrets - including the fact that they're all lycanthropes - *Rats* is hampered by a talky script; flat, amateurish performances; and effects that are bad even by Milligan standards. Seeing Hope Stansbury and the rest of the cast skulk through the shadows in very cheap werewolf makeup is funny for about a second, but the film meanders. It just doesn't possess the crazed energy one expects from Milligan in this period.

Originally entitled *Curse of the Full Moon*, Mishkin complained it was boring (and too short) and had Andy shoot ridiculous new footage with Hope and a bunch of rodents (starring two rats actually named Willard and Ben) in hopes of cashing in on that season's rat horror craze. "Andy couldn't get any gray rats, so he bought white rats and sprayed them with gray Krylon paint," cast member Eric Concklin recalled. "Of course, the rats didn't like that very much, so they started licking it off as we were shooting. By mid-afternoon they were white again, so he sold them back to the pet store."

Particularly ludicrous is a scene in which Hope chatters away to an obviously rubber rat. When Andy wanted to shoot close-ups of her torturing one of the small mammals, Stansbury refused and was outraged when Milligan talked a teenage boy into donning her dress and just shot his hands as he stabs and hammers a nail (!) through little Willard.

Rats is also unique for Andy's cameo as a rather effete gun salesman the only appearance Milligan ever made in one of his films. Perhaps the greatest horror was the fact that this was the first Milligan picture to earn the ultrabland "PG" rating. Although shot in the summer of '69, Rats didn't

see the light of day until 1972, when it was released on a double bill with *The Man with Two Heads*.

***

The Man with Two Heads is a most revealing Milligan creation - and one of his personal favorites. A retelling of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the picture opens with a prostitute's vicious murder on a London street. When the attacker hangs himself in his jail cell, Dr. Jekyll claims the body and brain for his scientific research. Jekyll isolates good and evil in particular sections of the brain and, injecting himself with a potion made from fluid from the criminal's cranium, uses himself as a human guinea pig.

The experiment proves diabolically successful as the serum turns the good doctor into the savage Mr. Hyde. Unfortunately his assistant erases the chemical equation for an antidote, and Dr. Jekyll is soon destroyed by the evil unleashed by Mr. Hyde.

Dennis DeMarne is superb in the dual lead role, particularly as the sadistic Mr. Hyde. A scene in which he torments a dance-hall prostitute disturbs - and is funny in a most unnerving way. On first kissing her at the club, he bites her lip. "Call me Daddy," he then tells her (which, as Joe Davies reported, was the nickname Andy demanded from his own street conquests). [*Milligan had completely forgotten shooting these scenes, and got all worked up when I described them. "Stop it, babe, you're givin' me a hard-on."*]

Back at her place, Hyde starts strangling her, then orders her to get him a drink, which he knocks over. "Did the Bad Man hurt the Little Girl?" he sneers. He then commands her to light his cigar, then sit at his feet. "There's nothing a man likes better than to come home to a cigar, a beautiful wife, and his dog - only you're not so beautiful and I don't have a dog. You be my doggie, eh? *Bark!*"

She acquiesces, and he burns her with the cigar, then stops again in the middle of strangling her. "It isn't time yet ... we don't want to spoil it, do we?" Eventually he kills her, tossing her decapitated head at another floozy.

The smoky music-hall scenes are among Milligan's most evocative, particularly an orgy sequence during which we see short flashes of grotesque, laughing heads, trussed-up naked bodies, and men riding each other like dogs. Andy and his whirly-swirly camera, moving like a crazed shark through chum-filled waters.

"Insanity represents a form of hope in Douglas Sirk's works," wrote Fassbinder. The same seems true for Milligan. "Andy had a thing about the mentally insane," said *Seeds* producer Allen Bazzini. "He used to frighten me with that. When he'd talk about it, his eyes lit up."

***

After grinding out five films in England, Andy returned to America in 1970. The two pictures originally made for Cinemedia - *Nightbirds* and *The Body Beneath* - came with him. Entering into a partnership with 42nd Street maven Phil Todaro, Milligan for the first time created his own movie company, Nova International Pictures, and set up shop right on the Deuce at 220 West 42nd Street.

Andy bought his first 35mm camera and, enlisting the financial assistance of "some character named Maibaum," made *Guru, the Mad Monk* for approximately $11,000. This was Milligan's first double-system work meaning picture and sound were recorded separately via camera and Nagra recorder, instead of together on film a la the Auricon. The move up to 35mm changed everything, and not necessarily for the better.

The large, heavy equipment meant Andy could no longer fly around the room shooting hand-held, and the crazed kinetics of Milligan's camerawork in previous efforts vanished. No more "swirl camera," no more in-your-face close-ups. Suddenly things became drearily conventional, and everything took longer to shoot - Andy managed twelve minutes a day with the Auricon, but only six or seven with double system.

Guru was shot in a rather unorthodox Manhattan church (*Kiss Me*'s Natalie Rogers ran a theater outfit there, the Dove Company, and Milligan recalled they were hiding Black Panthers during *Guru*'s filming) with the usual suspects featured, among them Neil Flanagan and Gerry Jacuzzo.

Flanagan's wife, Jackie, told of one poor actor getting the willies when Andy nailed him to a cross. "After the cameras were rolling, he inadvertently flinched. And Andy said, 'OK, that's it, no closeups for *you*!' The guy couldn't have cared less - all he wanted was to get out of there *alive*!"

Frank Echols plays a church bigwig outfitted with "this seed-pearl hat, blond wig, and a ratty old fur piece - I said, 'Andy, I look like an old hooker off Eighth Avenue!'" One night Echols and John Miranda ventured off to the Loews Delancey theater in Manhattan to watch *Guru*, eager to see Frank's beheading scene. "There was this Oriental couple sitting in front of us," Miranda recalled. "Frank got his head cut off and put on a platter - and the woman in front of us threw up."

Milligan disowned *Guru, the Mad Monk* as his worst picture. He had terrible trouble cutting it because he had been blissfully unaware that camera and sound recorder had to be linked together to maintain sync. But although it tends to run out of steam toward the end of its hour-plus and features a rather, uh, Methody lead performance by Paul Lieber, *Guru* is a scream and Milligan's most overt attack on organized religion.

"Nothing comes for free in this world," hisses the vampire Olga in *Guru*. Guru sees no hypocrisy in spreading the word of God while murdering those who wander into his church for help. "I preach one thing and continue believing another - self-survival," he says, an unholy man in a church full of vicious, amoral queens. Strip away the medieval costumes and canned music in *Guru* and everything can be viewed in terms of a street pickup. The exchanges are all so sleazy and desperate. Don't trust anyone, every man for himself, perhaps I'll do for you if you do for me.

Particularly revealing is a grim little exchange between Guru and his hunchback Igor. As the monk cuts flowers he belittles Igor. "I can talk to you and talk to you, and you just look up at me with that stupid smile of yours ... I can say anything to you, you ignorant bastard, and you just smile." Simple Igor exists only to make Guru happy, like a subservient little pooch. The sick bond between Guru and Igor resonates far more romantically than any of the idealized one-dimensional couples that

invariably walk off into the sunset in the unconvincing happy endings of Milligan's horror pictures.

In the very crazy next scene Guru faces himself in the mirror, guilty over belittling his love object. "You should really be nice to Igor, he really does love you." Guru suddenly goes schizo, telling the mirror, "You go to hell!" He goes back and forth yammering to himself, an inner battle over good and evil reminiscent of *The Man with Two Heads*. The monk wants to be good but every year the evil side "gets stronger and stronger." Guru might have been speaking the words, but the sentiment was pure Andy Milligan.

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Armed with terrific exploitation campaigns by "Diamond" Jim Brady (who stuck a tiny tombstone bearing his own name in the campaign for *Guru* "It was funny," recalled Todaro. "He died not very long after that"), Nova set about releasing *Guru* and *The Body Beneath* late in 1970 as a double-bill drive-in package. Although Andy denies it, Todaro insisted that *Nightbirds* also saw the briefest of releases - one disastrous week at the Cameo Theater. "Too arty ... wasn't enough sex in it." And that was that.

Somehow *Guru* and *Body Beneath* ended up in the claws of Chellee Wilson before being pawned off on long-time exploitation distributor Terry Levene. Milligan claimed he was robbed. He said he eventually had to physically go into theaters and reclaim his prints. Nova International Pictures turned into one more disaster for Milligan. He had nothing nice to say about any of the parties involved, particularly his former partner. "Todaro, he's a creep," hissed Andy. "I'd cheerfully kill him."

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Once again, Andy found himself with no place to go. He burned through distributors, never more than a step away from the gutter. Despite the fact that he had a track record grinding out moneymakers for Mishkin, the perception was that Mishkin was the one clever enough to con the public into seeing the pictures via his campaigns and business savvy. Andy was just the sap who ran the requisite film through the camera. Had exhibitors somehow been able to show blank leader, all the better - pesky annoyances

like Milligan could have been eliminated altogether. Andy was just a kook, a marginal character to be victimized.

"A guy like Milligan, who's at the bottom of the pecking order, is never gonna get paid," said distributor Sam Sherman. "Nobody respects him to begin with. They use him, then they're not happy with what he does. He might have some ability, but who would know?"

Then there were Andy's own shortcomings. He was stubborn. "If there was a real strong personality who would've gotten Andy to listen, he could've been developed into an important talent," claimed William Mishkin.

He was a dictator. "I think his undoing was never being able to delegate authority," said Candy Hammond. "Instead of recognizing other people's talents and bringing them along, he had to control every aspect. You can't do absolutely everything good when you're doin' everything. He could not let go of any detail."

"If somebody handed Andy a million dollars, he would do a movie in four days," said John Miranda. "He would build the sets, do all the costumes – if he could, he'd play all the parts. And he would produce and direct and edit and distribute it. And then he'd make four more movies. He wouldn't know how to be lavish - he has a used-cord mentality."

John Borske, who had fled England when the Cinemedia deal started falling apart, blamed Andy. "It was a sweet deal. ... It's the Milligan personality that put the shit to all that stuff." Ultimately, Borske felt that Andy was on some sort of suicide mission. "Everything should've gotten better and never did - and always got worse. He refused on all points, and they were so simple - better camera, better sound. Usin' film-stock ends - he thought the inconsistency was arty. The least of our expenses was film. Then if you argued with him, it was, 'Oh we don't have the money, Mishkin's fuckin' with me.' He could've done it. Self-destructive, purely self-destructive."

Still, despite the ridicule and heartbreak, Milligan refused to give up. "Andy was just sure if he got his movies into theaters, they'd be successful," said Candy Hammond. "He worked so hard to get the right connections, but it always seemed to be a dead end. He'd get real down, real angry."

All this left Andy Milligan more and more alone. By the mid-seventies he'd lost many of the people who'd stood by him over the years. "I truly cared for Andy, I felt guided by him," said Gerry Jacuzzo. "Andy was always a very volatile person, easily brought to upset or anger. A lot of volatility right below the surface, a lot of frustration, too ...

"Andy always said, 'Y'know, life ain't easy.' I think he had probably been hurt in his past, which made him build a wall around himself. Things were very rough for Andy. Hard times. I remember him telling me how he went to the Automat and made ketchup soup - ketchup and a container of water.
"I think Andy felt unloved. I don't think he could ever accept anyone's love. I think it frightened him. He thought it made him vulnerable. He was afraid to be vulnerable."

10

THE MAD BOMBER

I am afraid that the only real people in this life are found in the alleys.

- JEAN, IN MILLIGAN'S *COCTEAU*

"ANDY SAVED MY LIFE MORE THAN ONCE," said Hal Borske, remembering periods of homelessness in the seventies and eighties. Milligan bailed Hal out by giving him a place to live, but cohabiting with Andy was a Victorian nightmare. "Andy's a prude. He disapproved of almost everything I did." During one stay, Hal just figured he'd make it easy on himself by abandoning any vices. "After a couple weeks of not smoking, not drinking, being a nice, good boy, I was pretty unhappy." Borske cut loose, coming home with a six-pack and some smokes. As soon as Hal lit up, Milligan went berserk, screaming he couldn't breathe and throwing all the windows open. Then he threw Hal's beer out the window.

Yet when the work was done and Milligan wanted to whoop it up Andy style, look out. "I'm going out for therapy," he'd proclaim, disappearing into the blackness of night. Andy was a nightcrawler, always on the prowl for anonymous sex, and in the seventies one could find anything in New York City. Andy scurried everywhere, from 42nd Street movie theaters and West Village meat-packing district S&M bars like the Spike and the Mine Shaft to the empty semitrailers near the West Side Highway whose blank interiors hosted thousands of encounters. "Andy was very much into the trucks," said friend Charlie Richards. "It's surprising he didn't have to wear kneepads the rest of his life."

Milligan would slither back to Staten Island a wreck. "He'd go out on one of his all-night things, then come back all bedraggled at six in the morning," said friend Jack Murphy. "He'd look like somebody had just mopped the street with him - sometimes in his bare feet, carrying his boots - and stinking like a cat."

One of Andy's favorite haunts was the cluster of sex theatres in the 14th Street area - the Cine 14, the Variety Photoplays, and, in particular, the Met.

The Metropolitan was a cavernous, ancient ex-vaudeville hall where customers searching for strange flesh skulked through a dark, Lysol-doused passageway hidden behind a flickering screen of endless porno. Patrons dumb enough to just be sitting there watching the movie had to be wary of fallout from men masturbating in the balcony. It attracted all walks of life, but the emphasis was definitely on street trade. The Met was a rough joint, eventually shut down not long after someone was murdered while traversing its moist floors. Andy would troll the Met for hours on end. "I don't think he ever took a seat," quipped Murphy.

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Ironically, it was in the sweaty environs of the 14th Street sex theaters that Andy Milligan made a major return to the theatrical stage in 1971 by somehow conning porno matriarch Chellee Wilson into letting him put on productions at the Jewel, a Second Avenue and 14th Street rhinestone in her sticky tiara of porno dives. Dubbing the series "Plays for the Discriminating Homophile," Milligan only managed to stage two shows (one wound up not being performed at the Jewel), but on the evidence of the scripts and eye witness reports, they were among his most riveting productions - a return to the intensity of the Caffe Cino days.

First came *Section 8*, a raw, violent look at homosexuality in the Navy during World War II. The play is set in a San Diego barracks in 1945. Hal is a young innocent entranced by movie star mags and Bette Davis, a "mama's boy" from "the middle of nowhere." His bunkmate is Willy Williams, a black man who suffers much racism in the Navy. Willy and Hal are pals, but when the barracks are empty, they engage in secret sexual liaisons. For Willy it's a relationship of convenience - a pleasant diversion from the lack of female companionship. For Hal, it is something more - he dreams of moving to New York City with Willy to open a restaurant. Willy plays along, though he maintains that he's "not queer. I think that's the one thing I couldn't take ... to have someone think I'm queer."

A new bunkmate arrives - Marshall "Marsh" Conroy, a dumb, racist homophobe from Texas. Marsh is a loudmouthed bully who makes life miserable for all, amusing himself by urinating in Hal's shoes and proudly

recounting how he and his gang back home once tied a black man to the back of a truck and dragged him until he looked like "raw hamburger." Since Hal and Willy's black / white friendship "ain't natural," Marsh vows to make life miserable for them. He steals a letter in which Hal talks openly about his relationship with Willy, and, after taunting Hal, beating him bloody, and orally raping him, he turns Hal and Willy in. Branded Section 8, they are drummed out of the service.

As the two men are packing to leave, Hal tries to apologize to Willy, but when he tries to hug him good-bye, Willy slaps him, muttering, "Don't you ever touch me." Hal becomes hysterical and tears the place apart, finally committing suicide in the bunkhouse toilet. "Shit! There goes my liberty!" barks Marsh. Willy attacks him as an emergency siren wails.

Milligan rep actors Hal Borske and Gary Stone remember the production as a powerful one. There was nothing hasty in the creation of these indelible characters, and the empathetic portrait of Willy added one more layer of enigma to Milligan, who made no secret of his dislike for blacks.

Section 8's dialogue is as coarse and abusive as you'd expect from a group of uncensored servicemen, and the play is full of the kind of casual small talk so characteristic of Milligan's plays and movies. "The thing about Andy is there's always a gritty reality," said playwright Donald Kvares. "His realism is what makes him unusual - almost conversational realism - 'Did you see your mother yesterday?' 'No - was she there?' This, in the middle of a horror film."

There was no doubt to anyone involved that *Section 8* was a catharsis for Milligan. Hal Borske - who played the lead character, Hal Kovner recalled that Andy prowled the set detailing props with a stare that betrayed a man-with-the-X-ray-eyes intensity. "He kept telling me, 'This really happened, this really happened.' In one scene there was a diddy bag and I said, 'Well, Andy, the Navy uses this blue color ...' And he said, 'No, it was a *white* bag.' It *had* to be white." Milligan was in San Diego in 1945 and the Bette Davis-loving Hal character certainly could be the young Andy. But when I asked Milligan point blank if *Section 8* was a story he'd lived, the response was a

terse "no," followed by a silence that indicated the matter wouldn't be discussed further.

One moment everyone remembered was the opening scene in the barracks, in which *Vapors* star Gary Stone - once more naked as a jaybird - jerks off in front of the audience. Milligan gleefully promoted the event. "Andy used to answer the phone in the box office and say, 'Yes, the show starts at eight - don't be late or you'll miss the masturbation,'" said Stone.

Milligan concocted Hal's masturbating bunkmate Douglas Barrell with Stone in mind. "*Section 8* was an exhibitionist's dream ... I had a hard-on when the curtain opened. I was in such a state. I was on an upper bunk looking at girlie pictures and was supposed to turn toward the wall and simulate coming." When Stone asked if he could do it for real, Milligan told him it was illegal. But by the third day the inevitable happened. "I told Andy I came, and he said, 'Well, I didn't think you could come on cue.' So I did it every day." But only for the late show. With two shows a weeknight and three on the weekend, "you get a little deflated."

"A man can love anything ... he can love a dog," says a character in *Section 8*. Which Gary Stone knew only too well. During a costume change backstage, his fellow thespians could hardly believe their eyes. "When I took my clothes off they said, 'What the *hell* happened to *you*?' I had these deep scratches, I mean red scratches with bruises along the middle. And I said, 'Oh, I got fucked by a Great Dane.'" Only in Andy's world could one be so blasé about bestiality.

Stone elaborated on the history of the relationship. "I was out visiting a friend. We were all just lying there, listening to music. And this Great Dane sort of came on top of me, tried to drag me off the bed onto the floor. So I let it. It was flailing away with its paws, scratching me. It had rather sharp nails. It was really quite painful, but I had to do it. I had my first affair with a dog."

Stone's canine canoodling caused quite a stir. Before he knew it, he and the dog were strutting their stuff for a wealthy benefactor. "A fashionable type, he was. He gave a party and wanted me to be fucked by the dog at the party.

It was a fancy cocktail party. Upper East Side. I was like the cabaret. All these people were rather amazed. It was very exciting."

Stone wanted to make it absolutely clear to me that the pooch was not abused. "The dog was quite used to it it was a very happy dog. There was no force. As I say, the dog accosted *me*."

Andy got a big kick out of putting on *Section 8* at the Jewel, but as far as his career went, it was one more in a series of self-destructive moves. "How can you get a reviewer or the public to go to a fag porn theater to see a fag porn play?" mused Hal Borske. But then Andy Milligan made no bones about it - he was more at home in the gutter, preaching to those that might not hear the message otherwise.

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While *Section 8* dealt with the brutal realities of homosexual life, Milligan's next production, *Cocteau*, was a fey, bloody fantasia that is Andy at his most unbridled and romantic.

The year is 1908. All dolled up in pancake makeup and period finery just this side of drag, three rather wicked characters encircle each other. The soon-to-be famous Jean Cocteau is fought over by his lovers - legendary character actor Eduard De Max and a fictional fop named William Bordeaux. Bordeaux is a cruel but passionate sadist who controls Cocteau. Older and wiser, De Max waits for their relationship to fade and tries to hide his pain in the meantime. He gently instructs Cocteau that the passion of youth is transitory - when the male member "throws up his inner turmoil" and shrivels "oh so tiny," what's left? "The mind ... the mind is still supreme, my boy."

When both of Cocteau's lovers are absent, a mute, naked male creature that Jean dubs "Le Biche" crawls out of the shadows to comfort and violently penetrate Cocteau. While De Max accepts the animalistic relationship, Bordeaux is outraged, seducing the creature before stabbing it to death. Cocteau returns home to a feast prepared by Bordeaux, who confesses that he has killed Cocteau's lover in a fit of passion. Then, unveiling Le Biche's head on a tray, he confides that the meal Cocteau is enjoying is actually the

creature he loved. The final scene shows De Max and Cocteau reunited, and we learn that Bordeaux has committed himself after his murderous rampage. De Max is the victor after all - Cocteau promises him, "I shall never again let my heart rule my life ... My mind shall reign supreme."

This bland recounting of the story fails to convey the utter preposterousness of the dialogue. The characters exist only as mouthpieces for Milligan's wild ruminations on love, life, and art. "We are damned, you know ... and you love it." "Love is very close to hate.... One can kill for love if one really loves."

All of Andy's favorite little fetishes are here: spitting, slapping, and the "worship" game a la *Nightbirds*. The play is full of absurd exchanges: "Show it to me," Eduard says, demanding to see Cocteau's manhood. "Very well," mutters Jean. "May I fondle it?" De Max asks. "No," says Cocteau. "May I kiss it?" "No". "May I touch it?' "No." "I can look at it?" "Any time, Eduard," Cocteau replies. Frilly sophisticates with dirt under their manicured fingernails engaging in dizzying drawing-room banter while they debase, worship, and eventually cannibalize each other - this is Milligan's vision of heaven. It reminds me of a description of Andy by Donald Kvares: "On the surface, he comes off as very witty and charming and sweet - but underneath there is kind of a manic tenseness. And a nihilism."

Milligan claimed to have done major research for *Cocteau*, but, as actor Martin Reymert archly noted, whatever the play was about, "it certainly wasn't about Cocteau." Reymert gently chastised Andy over it, but he remained undeterred. "I made comments about certain people being *dead* while they were onstage together. Andy said, 'Oh, Martin, you're such a purist, such a purist!'"

The play contains Andy's most explicit male sexuality, all of it rooted in some sort of violence or sadism. The scenes between Cocteau and Le Biche are truly wild, staged so the creature darts in and out of the audience. Cocteau must have been quite shocking for 1972. First staged at the Players Theater after the Jewel quickly abandoned its theatrical experiments, Eric Concklin - who played Bordeaux - maintained the production was somewhat cleaned up for a more legit second run at Bastiano's Playwrights'

Workshop in the fall. Concklin considered the play "the most degrading thing I've ever done in my life ... quasi-porno."

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William Mishkin Motion Pictures continued churning out product throughout the seventies, moving away from horror after the relative failure of the *Rats Are Coming / Man with Two Heads* drive-in package. "We had so much in prints and advertising, we broke even," said Lew. But as William began to fade into the background, his son cranked out a fairly aimless bunch of oddities.

Best of all for grindhouse fans was 1977's much-beloved *Fight for Your Life* a.k.a. *Held Hostage* a.k.a. *Stayin' Alive*, a vicious, very funny race exploitation version of *The Desperate Hours*. *Fight for Your Life* was "an abusive picture to sit through," recalled screenwriter Straw Weisman. "The idea was bigotry should lose - which of course it does, but it takes ninety-one minutes. My favorite line is 'I don't want no little witnesses' when he's about to shoot the baby". *Fight* should've been a monster hit, but it came too late in the blaxploitation cycle to mean anything.

Other Mishkin curios from this era include *The Filthiest Show in Town* the "first nude TV game show" - and *That Man Is Pregnant*. "A cop who gets knocked up," explained Weisman. "The campaign was a pregnant cop! Only the Mishkins." But perhaps the biggest anomaly of all was *Pelvis*, a supremely unfunny 1977 musical comedy concerning the rise and fall of a well-endowed ersatz Elvis. "Off-key," yawned the *Variety* review. The Mishkins attempted to revive this turkey under a variety of disguises - *All Dressed Up in Rubber with No Place to Go, Disco Madness*, and - with terrible softcore inserts shot by Milligan - *Toga Party*.

One production assistant who insisted on remaining anonymous recalled an embarrassing screening of *Toga Party* for which the Mishkins attempted to create a *Rocky Horror Picture Show* buzz by outfitting whatever saps would participate in wacky constumery (even William Mishkin donned a dunce cap). But cast members were outraged at Milligan's smutty inserts. "People threw chairs through the windows. Will thought the publicity would be

good. The movie was such a total flop, he was desperately trying to create some furor over the film."

Changing times did not bode well for the Mishkins. "Not much of what Lew did made money. The kind of film he did, the market was sort of saturated with," said bookkeeper Jerry Garibaldi. They lived off their back catalogue, shipping the same tattered prints to drive-ins for meager flat flees. "You tried to play 'em to death. A date was a date. You would be continually inspecting, repairing, and cannibalizing prints."

Lew Mishkin would move into the kung fu market, becoming an expert in the field, while Andy Milligan would become a relic of the past. But Andy teamed up with William for one last picture in 1972, and it was a doozey - *Fleshpot on 42nd Street*. "I think that *Fleshpot* is a great minor film," said Mishkin, Sr. "Lewis never thought that it was even a good film - or a fair film. It was not one of my big pictures, although it was without question the best picture that Andy made for me."

Fleshpot deals with that unholy subset of street life: hooker and drag queen. Dusty is a prostitute who comes on sincere but inevitably fleeces trick after trick. Cherry is a plump drag queen whose boisterous persona is a cover for endless misery: "I'm no prize package ... I'm a cocksucker ... I'm not even a good one ... I hide from the world in this getup ... It ain't easy bein' a freak." The pair swap stories of tricks and general bad luck.

Dusty meets Bob, a square Staten Island john who represents everything Dusty isn't. When Dusty reveals the nature of her gig, Bob is kind. "I hustle for a living," she says. "Everybody does," says an unsurprised Bob. They fall in love, much to the consternation of Cherry, who'd rather she just rip off his TV set and come home. But Bob gets hit by a car while walking Dusty to the ferry, and she winds up back on 42nd Street, turning another trick and addicted to "the hard stuff."

Fleshpot is prime Andy Milligan. Utilizing for the last time his very mobile 16mm Auricon, the film has a loose feel that had reviewers deeming it an "underground" film worthy of Andy Warhol. The seedy dialogue is straight out of an ill-lit Eighth Avenue watering hole, full of references to Nixon, the

church, and anything Times Square. At one point Andy throws in a shameless plug for himself when Cherry suggests that they "take in that double horror bill at the Lyric ... *Torture Dungeon* and *Bloodthirsty Butchers*." The drab locations evoke a Deuce so long gone that it now seems almost prehistorically quaint. Neil Flanagan (billed as "Lynn Flanagan") is riotous as Cherry, and Milligan coaxes believable performances out of porno exports Harry Reems (credited as "Bob Walters"), Diana Lewis, and Fred Lincoln.

Boasting a lurid campaign ("Both are hustlers ... but one is a male. Guess which?") with crude graphics reminiscent of thirties exploitation, while trumpeting performances by "underground superstars," *Fleshpot* got great reviews - "The Fleshpot bubbles!" clucked *Variety* - and was available in a number of versions, from "triple-X" to "R" (titled *The Girls of 42nd Street*). But "*Fleshpot* didn't do as well as I hoped it would," said William Mishkin, and it was Milligan's swan song for the distributor.

One more Mishkin picture was in the works circa 1973 - *Supercool* a.k.a. *Sharon*, Milligan's only stab at Blaxploitation - but it wound up a complete disaster. *Supercool* concerned the exploits of Sharon, the "female Shaft," a cold, omnipotent karate expert and whorehouse madam who started "sellin' it when I was nine." *Supercool*'s femmes are either conniving hookers or cold kung fu killing machines; the men are either weaklings to be played or total psychotics like the heroin kingpin Mr. B, a schemer who gets off in the neck when not plotting everybody's demise.

Another pungent slice of Times Square life a la *Fleshpot*, the hard-boiled script is all about deal-making, whether it be for heroin, gun running, or massage parlor pussy. "One ass kisses another" in this unsentimental world of lowlife politicians and petty thieves. Ever the master of mundane dialogue, Milligan wrote a script that is witty and real, refreshingly free of white appropriation of black lingo.

"It never got finished because Andy didn't do what he was supposed to do and we walked away from it," said Mishkin of *Supercool*. "He just wasn't following his own script, so we abandoned it. We sued him. We couldn't collect anything." Milligan remembered it differently.

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SUPERCOOL WAS AN ABORTION. Lew decided he was gonna be a producer. It was completed - we had about three days left to finish it. The girl who had the lead was very pretty, a light-skinned black, looked like Diahann Carroll ... and it was in her contract: no nudity. *Shaft in Africa* opens on 42nd Street. And Lewis took her to see Fred Williamson [Shaft in Africa *actually starred Richard Roundtree.*] **in *Shaft in Africa* and he pointed out that he does nudity - and he pointed out that if she didn't, he'd put in a double that would. She didn't show up the next day. I have a big shoot out on Staten Island and the lead girl doesn't show up. Call her up, she's in tears, hysterical. She said, "You call Lew and ask him why I'm not coming."**

I called Lew and he started stuttering. I said, "You SOB, I'll see you in court." He threatened and I threatened; nothing ever happened. I gave all the quarter-inch sound tapes to the actors so he couldn't finish the film. He never went to court 'cause he knew he couldn't win.

Lew's whole thing is, "It doesn't have to make sense, all I want is shlock!" One good thing about William - being an old script man, he wanted schlock, but he insisted on pictures making sense. Whereas Lew - hee hee - had no taste whatsoever!

***Supercool* was a very glitzy, very elegant picture. Cast was mostly black. I don't like working with blacks; they're undependable. We'd have a call for nine-thirty and they'd show up at ten-thirty ... I lost two cameras. They're terrible about learning their lines. They always want to change everything and they're a pain in the ass.**

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FLESHPOT'S A WILD FILM. I shot a lot of scenes on 42nd Street. Hit-and-run stuff, shot from a drive-by car. No slates, somebody just claps hands. Neil Flanagan would have to hide in the doorway until we were ready to shoot, then he'd say, "Hi, honey" and we'd grab half a page. I couldn't find a drag queen or a transvestite who could act. Candy Darling was on drugs ... they're all terrible actors. I never had

drugs or drink *ever* on my set. You're not *allowed* to have a beer at lunchtime. You're not *doing* that stuff - you're portraying it. You're either a pro or not a pro. Hell hath no fury like Andy Milligan.

***Fleshpot* - that was the seedy 42nd Street before it became the seedy 42nd Street. Hubert's Flea Circus and Grant's hot dog stand, they were the only hangout places. One corner, that was the only place that you really saw the underbelly of Manhattan. Then it started spreading - it took mayors like Wagner, shits like that, to destroy the city.**

Only actor I ever fought with was Harry Reems. His real name's Herb Stryker. Herb Stryker thinks he's a big star. I really had a rough time trying to get him to simplify, become an actor and not a porno star. He came around at the end - told me it was the best thing he ever did on film. Diana Lewis was a lovely actress - a cold fish, but very professional. Would've loved to get into regular acting. Hated being in that business.

***Fleshpot* has only one penetration scene - Harry and the girl. It was very graphic, very erotic, very beautiful. I didn't do it as hardcore - big warmup - they go in the bath room, they come out ... I remember I used blue towels with orange lighting ... then eventually the penetration. We did it almost slow motion.**

But as soon as we did *Fleshpot*, that's when I got out of exploitation. I got out when they got into penetration. That was it. Lewis Mishkin says, "You are the most moral person I ever met doing immoral films." I'm very conservative. I don't mind talking all that shit, but *doing* it ... I found it sleazy to shoot a penetration - let 'em go see a fuck film. Why put together a film with dialogue if they can go see a fuck film? Why not just turn out a fuck film, a Mafia fuck film? Why do dialogue? I enjoy a good fuck film when it's strictly fuck, but when they try to plot it and act it, it's just *bad*. Even when it's good, it's bad.

I've done exploitation *without* exploitation! First one to do frontal nudity, first one to put fuck, shit, shooting up, LSD, all this shit - now

that's all you hear in films. You've *done* it. Once you've done something, why do it again?

Now everything is exploitation films. They don't make anything *but* exploitation films. Everything is manipulative today - there's no heart in the stuff. We're so crass today, so blasé to things. And we're so knowledgeable about everything now - four year-olds know the four-letter words and every position there is. We're all regressing terribly. Manners, morals, everything. The funny part of it is, it's a cancer. Once it starts, there's no cure for it.

People in movies today are not nice. You could care less about the hero. We don't have good guys or bad guys. There is no feeling any more. Even the nice films are unpleasant.

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However tortured the Milligan / Mishkin relationship, it had enabled Andy to make films - lots of them. Over the next fifteen years he would only make four pictures (one unreleased), and he would be tangentially involved with three more. All bombed. Worse yet, they were dull. It's funny - when Andy Milligan turned his back on exploitation, the fire seemed to fade.

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"Go to hell," mutters Regina to her husband in Milligan's 1974 picture *Blood*. "We're there already," he responds. She's the daughter of Dracula, he's the son of werewolf Larry Talbot. *Blood* had all the requisite Milligan ingredients - sick family, domineering wives, limping servants - but the results are inert and, even for Andy, amateurish. The big villain of the picture is a carnivorous plant, basically a foggy pile of leaves that somehow emits a sound not unlike a beach ball being rubbed against a naugahyde chair. Milligan claimed to have never seen the film.

Walter Kent - a heavyset New Jersey man alleged to be part-owner of the Beacon Baths - produced *Blood* for around $20,000. Andy boasted he sold it to Bryanston Pictures for double that amount (if Milligan did get paid by the notorious Bryanston, he was one of the few).

Milligan met Kent through his involvement in the very obscure *Dragula*, a gay spoof of the vampire myth shot on Fire Island that had a couple of minuscule New York / Los Angeles showings. Andy started out as camera man, then "he took over," said Hal Borske, who appeared in drag in the picture ("A fucking blond wig. I look like Ethel Kennedy - if she came from Newark"). The picture starred gay porno sensation Cal Culver and Jacques Brower - previously the nude creature "Le Biche" in *Cocteau* - as the gay Dracula.

"It's about a hairdresser in Harlem. The natural look comes in so this wig binder turns into a vampire," said Borske. "Every time this drag queen bit someone, they turned into a drag queen," added the picture's co-producer, restaurateur Calvin Holt. Milligan also contributed to another Kent comedy, *Jungle Bust*, an unreleased atrocity that interwove footage of silent comedians with that of some young woman the picture was titled for. "She had knockers that wouldn't quit," said bit player Heather McLeod.

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With film work evaporating, Milligan retreated further into Staten Island, relocating to another creepy house at 149 Corson. It was "haunted," said Jerry Walker. "No one ever went in there - if you did, you got chills immediately."

Milligan turned once again to theater, gathering around him yet another ragtag bunch of haplessly devoted thespians. At the core of the group was a trio of actresses - Elaine Boies, Louise Schiumo, and Jeannie Cusick, stylish dames "who fit the old-fashioned qualities of being a woman," as Cusick said. Other regulars included Martin Reymert, Randa Kriss, Heather McLeod, and whatever other flotsam Andy could fish up.

"Once he wanted my husband to play a part - he almost fainted," said Schiumo. "I'm not an actor!" exclaimed the husband. "All the better I can't stand them," responded Andy. "He literally picked people off the street," recalled Boies. "I said, 'You have contempt for the actors, playwrights, the audience ... why do you do it?' He just laughed."

Initially, Milligan's presence energized the locals. "It was very exciting to be around. Very exciting," said Schiumo. "I think we were all hoping this man would lead us to stardom. He always looked like he was going somewhere."

One of the group's first productions was a reprise of *The Maids*, the play that had so shocked patrons back in the Cino days. Milligan put it on first in a place called Charlie's Bar, then moved it to a nearby restaurant. One can only imagine the reaction of the Staten Island locals to the depravity of *The Maids*.

Milligan outfitted cast member Randa Kriss with a whip. "I tried to do choreography so they wouldn't get hurt," said Heather McLeod. "But they got welts - and a few other things." Kriss tried to fake the whipping scene, but "because we had rushed everything and put everything together so quickly without any real thought to it, I missed - and the young lady didn't move. And I hit her." Kriss was so traumatized that she "practically left theater for a year and a half." Milligan, forever the sadist.

"Andy could be very dangerous," recalled Reymert. "I was perfectly aware if Andy lost control he could go too far. He was very good at spotting people's weaknesses. I have a real thing about being called Marty ... he knew perfectly well nobody called me Marty. To this *day* he's the only person who calls me Marty."

Occasionally Milligan would take side jobs in Manhattan to make some money, but even those turned ugly. "In every production, Andy would always find something," said Reymert, who directed a production of Sardu's *Tosca* at the WPA that Milligan did costumes for. "Nine times out of ten the typical image of Tosca is this big blonde - and this girl Francine was a blonde - but Andy insisted she wear this brunette wig he had. Talk about out of left field. It was historically wrong, theatrically wrong - there was no reason for it. He was gonna pull all his costumes and not finish the rest unless she wore this wig. It almost pulled the production apart."

Andy provoked violence. One theater owner went after Milligan with a pipe, breaking a few of his ribs. Gerry Jacuzzo recalled a night at the Dom

nightclub in Manhattan when somebody punched Milligan in the face, bloodying his nose. "He said it was for absolutely no reason in the world. It was just the most bizarre thing - why would somebody choose to punch Andy right in the face ... ? He just doesn't tell you everything. I would've been in tears - and in shock - but he laughed it off. It was really strange."

Wherever Milligan went, turmoil followed. As Louise Schiumo saw it "Andy created love / hate all around him."

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Milligan moved again, this time to the absolute nether regions of Staten Island - Tottenville. Even compared to the rest of Staten Island, Tottenville was another dimension, with New Jersey oil refineries lining the narrow Arthur Kill channel to the west and marshes to the north full of torched late model Cadillacs with trunks no one dared pry open. But Milligan was determined to bring culture to the hinterlands. First he opened the requisite haute-couture dress shop. "That bombed," said Charlie Richards. "Tottenville just wasn't ready for high fashion."

Andy bought another decaying turn-of-the-century outpost, the old Tottenville Hotel at 44 Main Street. As Hal Borske - who lived there briefly recalled, the desolate, decrepit hulk was located at "the end of the line, the very last stop on the Toonerville Trolley." Milligan turned the place into a twenty-dollar-a-week flophouse for reclusive drifters and old alcoholics. "His boarders were as kooky as he was - bums, castaways," said Heather McLeod. "The boarding house was in shambles."

Andy tortured his ailing tenants. "You could have no visitors in the house," said former resident Al Hohmann. "He'd let you have one visitor on Friday night - until midnight. He was adamant about it." The Tottenville Hotel was another haunted house. "When I first moved in, he had the basement set up like a crypt - a coffin with a skeleton in it."

Andy put on plays in a local Boy Scout meeting hall, then moved to a nearby Tottenville church, telling Reymert, "Enough of this amateur night - we're gonna start a real theater." "Real theater, indeed," snorted Reymert. "I

mean, there we were in the church basement in Tottenville - the end of the world!"

Reymert recalled praying for his life as he waltzed around Staten Island trussed up in heavy drag rehearsing *The Importance of Being Earnest* opposite some monosyllabic Tottenville teenage hunk. "Andy had me tarted up as Lady Bragnall, done up in tulle and headdress and sequins. Sixties drag, all wrong. I said, 'She's not supposed to be glamorous - she's an old bag.' Andy said, 'Oh, well ... we gotta lotta tulle.' I thought, 'Oh *God*, I'm gonna be *lynched* on the *street*.'" Milligan swore the locals had no idea she was a he.

Andy's attention span seemed shorter than ever. "He'd do the classics, quote - unquote, and just slaughter them," said Reymert. Outfitted in Milligan's wild costumes, actors would have to race through productions or risk Andy audibly stamping his feet and screaming at them during performances if the tempo lagged. His only guidance? "Just *do* it."

"You'd see little flashes of his brilliance, but he did it all shoddily. He was knocking it out so fast that it was really bad," Elaine Boies remembered. "Everything was surface," said Louise Schiumo. "Nothing had substance." Even his own plays "got worse as time went on," said Gerry Jacuzzo. "He put them together too quickly."

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Utilizing his Staten Island regulars, Milligan made yet another forgettable period horror movie in 1978, *Legacy of Blood*, and, improbably enough, it's a nicely shot but pointless remake of his own *Ghastly Ones*. Randa Kriss recalled that Milligan nearly impaled one of the actors during a pitchfork scene. "Had he not moved, it would have gone directly through his throat. He immediately became upset to the point of going outside and throwing up. Andy was yelling, 'Get your ass back in here, we've got to get this over and done with.'"

The movie premiered at the local Jerry Lewis Cinema, got dumped onto 42nd Street via the Anco Theatre, then promptly faded from sight. Milligan then started shooting a preposterous Civil War horror epic entitled *The*

House of Seven Belles, but never finished it (all that exists are as-yet-unseen reels of workprint and track in the author's possession, along with an incomplete script - apparently Milligan wanted the main locale, a grand Southern mansion, to burn up in a fiery finale).

One of Milligan's wildest scripts, *Seven Belles* concerns the LaFleur sisters, a pack of scheming females fending off locals attempting to grab their beloved Trans Floria mansion in the post-Civil War South. Yet another matriarchy gone wrong - "It's all their mother's fault ... She taught them to be so independent ... She ruined them for any man," Aunt A crows. Milligan monkey business abounds via a plethora of kooky characters: Violet, who visits the family crypt to consult her father's corpse (whose head, Milligan notes in the script, looks "greenish and none too fresh") in a rather intimate fashion; Judd, the stuttering half-wit (played by Hal Borske - who else?), who rapes deaf-mute sister Daisy Mae, then gets castrated in revenge; Lilly Lee, the sister who gets caught working in a brothel "riding some man as if he was a horse and whipping him with a crop"; and Hecuba, a black witch who is the illegitimate offspring of a LaFleur elder and his slave, who advises that the sisters are all still "good merchandise" and they should marry "whoever's got the most money." But the LaFleurs refuse to kowtow to any man - at one point one of the sisters is shown reading *Wuthering Heights*: "Someday women will be doin' a lot of things." The result is the utter destruction of everyone, not to mention a lot of slapping and spitting.

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By the late seventies Milligan had worn out his welcome on Staten Island. "The townspeople had something to do with his leaving," chuckled Martin Reymert. Too many fights with actors, too many half-baked projects, too many unpaid debts. "He would say, 'OK, you're gonna get $50 a day,'" Randa Kriss recalled. "By the time I was finished, he owed me $500." "Andy borrowed from everybody on earth until he made a ton of enemies," said Louise Schiumo. "He had so many debtors he had to leave."

But Milligan had already hatched a crazy new plan. Out on one of his Manhattan crawls he'd discovered a trashed building in the heart of Times Square at 335 West 39th Street that was on the market for $50,000. With a

little renovation it would be a perfect home for an off-off-Broadway repertory theater company. The building would house two forty-seat theaters, and Andy wanted plays to be running seven days a week. Milligan would christen it the Troupe Theater.

"Basically, Andy wanted his own theater and couldn't afford it - and bought the building by selling stocks in the building," said actor and long time friend Ron Keith. "Five hundred dollars a share, nineteen stockholders." Milligan even had the hide to go back to all the Staten Islanders he owed money to, conning some of them into investing. The Milligan charm was working overtime. "Andy borrowed a thousand dollars from *me* - Mr. Frugality himself, who doesn't lend anything to anybody."

The Troupe was originally presented as a democracy. "The idea was that as a shareholder, you were part of the theater and could put on whatever shows you wanted - it was your theater," Keith explained. "But Andy was artistic director - and lived in the building - so he was very much in control of what was happening. He made such a pest of himself they eventually said 'Oh, go fuck yourself' and took their shows and did them somewhere else."

Milligan's dictatorial ways quickly drove his original investors crazy, forcing him to become more devious. "When the old guard got tired of his crap, then he'd bring in new people to invest," said Heather McLeod. "I'll tell ya, it was the only board of directors I've ever been on where I wasn't invited to the meetings. It was amazing. He just did what Andy Milligan wanted to do, frankly."

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The Troupe opened on October 27, 1977, with Milligan's *The Bitch* in the downstairs theater and Ibsen's *Ghosts* above. But instead of a dream come true, the Troupe became Andy Milligan's worst nightmare. He nearly killed himself renovating the building, which was in far worse shape than anybody had thought. The theater was right next door to a methadone clinic and, with the Port Authority nearby, attracted all sorts of street vermin. Andy's quick fix rehabilitation job failed to address major structural problems, and there would never be enough money to adequately run things.

Playwright Jeremiah Newton catalogues the Troupe experience in pungent detail. "Critics didn't like to go there. The coffee was rancid, an insult for fifty cents, and the ceiling leaked in the middle of performances. You had to put pots out. A veritable firetrap. Mice in the dressing room, no toilet paper. Andy would promise he would have critics come and they wouldn't until the night before we closed. Nothing was ever done, costumes were done two days before. No one ever got paid anything, no one ever got proceeds from the door."

Milligan refused to illuminate the theater adequately. "Dim as a funeral parlor," said Newton. "Andy would get furious – furious - about lights. He'd say, 'Klieg lights only last for a certain amount of time, and none of you people are going to pay for them, because they burn out.' It was a nightmare. We had to read scripts in the dark."

Just being in the building was scary. "I think it was haunted," said Newton. "You never felt like you were there alone ... you felt a lot of very bad things had happened there. Andy talked about ghosts and things - and after a while you believed him. The building was very old and it creaked."

"Andy wouldn't put in an air conditioner in the middle of summer," said Elaine Boies. "I'm playing Nora in *A Doll's House* and I'm perspiring like a woman on the Staten Island Ferry. When there was an intermission, people ran into the street and didn't come back. I would've gone, too, if I didn't have to do a second act!"

"You really had to be there in the middle of winter - when the wind howled through it - to appreciate the beauty of the place," Newton continued. "The audience would be sitting there in their scarves, mufflers, and gloves while the rain came in. You'd lose actors because they came down with the flu. I could really appreciate how the old vaudevillians felt.

"If you wanted actors, you had to advertise the address, not the name. Because once you said 'the Troupe' their eyes would widen and they'd say, 'Well, listen, give me a call. I think I'm going away in summer stock ...' It had a terrible reputation. There's a blacklist board at Equity and the Troupe was on there so many times it was laughable.

"It was really a horrible scene. This broken-down theater with heroin addicts outside - you had to step over dead bodies to get in. It was the end of the line ... a house of horrors for actors."

And yet even Milligan's critics admit that, almost single-handedly, Andy kept the theater alive for a very grueling seven years and, without any grants funding, put on hundreds of plays.

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By the time of the Troupe, Andy was in his fifties and physically a mess. He now had jowls, a sizable paunch, and his home-mended clothes were frequently in tatters. At times he was so disheveled he resembled just one more street person scuttling down 39th. But this didn't restrain him from critiquing the appearance of others. Jeremiah Newton remembered Milligan lecturing him about his weight.

"He took me into this diner and started talking about my gaining weight - how no one's gonna sleep with me - and I was looking at him and thinking, 'How could *he* talk about looks?' He had these awful yellow teeth, a faded mustache, and he just smelled terrible. He was very grimy. He always looked like he'd been sleeping in his clothes for months."

Milligan lived on the fourth floor of the Troupe surrounded by piles of costumes, scripts, a TV set full of bullet holes, and an endless stream of stray cats led by the notorious Trouper, who - much to the consternation of the actors - liked to plop its tubby body down smack dab in the middle of the stage during performances. Andy had carpeted the fourth floor in garish astroturf and never changed the litter box, so Trouper "shit all over the plastic shag," remembered editorial assistant Scott Means. "Trouper only ate Entemann's donuts. That's all he ever fed the damn thing. Must've weighed fifty-five pounds."

Means saw Andy's past scattered everywhere. "He kept all his film in plastic bags, big trash bags - 'That's *Guru*.' Other films were just big heaps on the floor. The cat would come down there and take a little snippet of film and start running with it. I'd go, 'Andy, the cat's running away with the film.' And he'd say, 'No, no - Trouper doesn't play with film.'"

Via Lew Mishkin, Milligan hooked up with English producer Michael Lee in 1983 to crank out *Carnage*, a forgettable lowball *Poltergeist* knockoff that featured regulars from the Troupe. Andy pointed out that it was one of the few Milligan pictures to go substantially over budget-$32,500 instead of $30,000. Another tiny bit of film work came a year later with a handful of episodes of something called *Red Rooster*.

Red Rooster was the brainchild of one Don Tobey, a retired chemical engineer who wanted to produce a play he'd written. Milligan convinced him to shoot it as a TV show, and the result was the most excruciating, embarrassing Milligan creation ever. A crass, outdated "comedy" about a pre Viagra booster pill for men, it basically allowed Andy to wallow in cheap jokes about a host of stereotypes - hillbillies, the Mob, Middle Eastern sheiks - all set to generic banjo music.

According to a very amused Milligan, Don Tobey would go out and buy outfits for the actresses, then request that Andy give him their worn stockings afterward. "Tobey had this thing about girls with miniskirts," said Hal Borske. "They had to have miniskirts. Andy had a huge fucking fight with him." The Troupe was such an icebox during the winter shoot, you can actually see the cast members' breath. *Red Rooster* was an unsalable flop.

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Nothing Andy did during this period worked. Scott Means recalled Milligan getting hired to do a kung fu movie for Dimension Pictures and getting fired almost immediately. "Andy can only make his own movies, nothing else."

But although his behavior was seemingly at an all-time low at the Troupe, Milligan once again found new hardcore disciples. "There's something about Andy that makes you want to protect him, even when he's running over you with a steamroller," said actress Barbara Ramsey.

Actors Rosemary Egan Olcott, Leslie Den Dooven, and Al Alfano a.k.a. Dennis John Malvasi would all speak of Milligan in glowing terms, and the trio formed a tight-knit family during the Troupe days. Of particular interest was Dennis Malvasi, one of the more extreme characters in the Milligan

fold. "They had some sort of uneasy alliance," said Scott Means. "Andy called him 'the Mad Bomber.'"

A self-described "excitement junkie," Malvasi was a charming character even when calling collect from the Big House, a.k.a. the United States Federal Penitentiary in Kansas. He was forthcoming about his colorful past "I wouldn't hesitate impersonating a police officer or special task force agent back in the old days" - and lived by his own morality. "Robbin' from an old lady, that's bad. Robbin' from thieves, that's not."

Born in 1950, Malvasi was one of twelve children and liked to suggest that his absentee father was actor John Garfield, whom he resembled. After years in a Catholic orphanage, Malvasi walked into a Times Square recruitment center at age seventeen and enlisted. As a member of the 27th Marines, he saw heavy combat during the Tet Offensive - "My unit got wiped out in five months." (Malvasi's exploits would be later immortalized in Mark Baker's oral history, *Nam*.)

Returning to the States, Malvasi drifted for a while, then "just dropped out of society. I came back from two years in Vietnam, so nothin' fazed me." He dabbled in acting and spent time in prison. On a whim in 1970, Malvasi answered an ad for Linda Mussman's Avenue A theater company. Still residing in a tough East New York neighborhood, Malvasi was stabbed and nearly killed coming home from the theater one night by an assailant wielding a pair of scissors. He started carrying a gun, and in 1975 was arrested by a subway cop for carrying an unlicensed .25 automatic. Two years in prison took its toll on Malvasi. "He was a very different person," Mussman told *Daily News* reporter Michael Daly. "There was no recovery. Believe me."

At some point Malvasi ran into Milligan and the Troupe Theater. "What happened is, Andy fell in love with me," said Malvasi, who wandered off the street one day and suddenly found himself reading for a play he didn't know and couldn't read - Malvasi was illiterate. "I just shrugged my shoulders and started ad libbin' through the whole thing." Malvasi's no-nonsense approach and streetwise demeanor endeared him to Milligan immediately.

"Andy would let me do anything I wanted. I'd run lights, do sound, run box office - and take last-minute directions from Andy as I walked out," he said. Rosemary Egan saw the relationship as "Andy adopting this street kid. Al was his right-hand man." Malvasi recognized Milligan as another renegade. "What I liked about Andy is he was like me - he didn't deal with banks." [*Malvasi professed to know little of Milligan's private life and when told Andy didn't care for women much, he agreed. "Women - well socially, who does? C'mon, whaddaya gonna do with them - ride subways, rob banks? You can't do any of that with women."*]

Malvasi was the perfect foil for Milligan. He liked to dress up in costume and crash Andy's period plays, throwing the other actors off guard with his ad libs. He fondly remembered one night that the Troupe came up one actress short. "Instead of Andy givin' people their money back and cancelin' the show, he had me put on a skirt and go out there and wing it."

No one could quite figure Malvasi out. He carried three different IDs, came and went at will, and possessed a Victorian morality not unlike Milligan's. "He never wanted to have sex - that was only for prostitutes," said Rosemary Egan.

Egan got a taste of Malvasi's darker side the night she put him up at her home. "I woke up and there he was, covered in a cold sweat. He was sure someone was prowling outside. And he had a knife in his hands - he put it under the pillow. He kept saying how because of his background he could sense when something evil was lurking around. I was petrified."

Malvasi acted in a host of Troupe productions as well as Milligan's *Carnage*. But there were still more surprises to Dennis Malvasi. He was actively involved with Our Lady of the Roses, an extremist religious group led by a Long Island housewife named Veronica Lueken who claimed that the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ spoke through her. Denounced by the Catholic Church, the group was rabidly antiabortion.

Malvasi's role in the group grew very public after the Troupe closed. Starting in late 1985, there were four abortion clinic bombings in Manhattan

and Queens. Investigators traced the explosives to Malvasi, a licensed pyrotechnics expert.

Malvasi had already been declared a fugitive on March 13, 1985, charged in Florida with buying guns using a phony license. He seemed to relish his outlaw status, telling reporter Samuel G. Freedman, "I don't feel good unless I have someone hunting me down ... it makes me feel wanted." He finally turned himself in on February 24, 1987, a day after Cardinal O'Connor made a televised plea for his surrender. As Malvasi explained to Freedman, "I got enough problems without God being mad at me."

Few at the Troupe knew of Malvasi's double life. Rosemary Egan was stunned to see his picture flash across the evening news. Not long before, she had shared the stage with "Al" in one of Andy's very last New York productions, an ill-fated musical entitled *Cinderella '85*. "Al was a singing mouse," she said. "I couldn't figure out why he wouldn't put his name in the credits."

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Coming up with enough productions for the Troupe's twin theaters meant Milligan's quality control reached an all-time low. "It got worse at the Troupe," said Louise Schiumo. "He was turning 'em out like sausage links. The faster he turned 'em out, the worse it got."

Milligan's patience - never a strong point - seemed to vanish. He appeared intent on destroying actors. Martin Reymert quit Milligan for good after witnessing a vicious verbal attack on Heather McLeod in the Tottenville Theater. "The number on Heather was the worst I ever witnessed ... She went up on her lines in rehearsal. Who doesn't? He just took her apart. Everybody was forced to sit and watch, wanting to go up and hit him." McLeod, who had been with Andy since the mid-seventies, finally had enough one night at the Troupe when, according to Randa Kriss, "Andy ended up hitting one of her actors mid-performance."

Dan Handley watched Milligan go berserk during a production of *The Three Sisters.* "This woman he made a costume for didn't like the color and

thought the sleeves were too tight. So he literally ripped the dress to shreds off her body and said, 'Make your own costume.'"

"I would just get so nervous I couldn't function properly," said Rosemary Egan, stung by Milligan's unrelenting criticism during a production of *A Doll's House*. "I remember I fell down the stairs crying because of Andy. The next day somebody said something to Andy about what he did to me the night before and he started laughing."

Milligan had a way of unnerving everyone. "He was gonna teach me to act - every other line he was givin' me inflections," said Norman Beim of another production. "I'd been around long enough and knew just as much or more about acting as he did ... he was just destroying me."

"Sometimes I'd have a raging argument in the mirror so I got my rage argued out before I got to the theater," said Ron Keith. "I've been madder at him than anybody in my life, I think. He used to drive me absolutely crazy."

Rosemary Egan recalled with horror watching Milligan run amok on the closing night of *Cinderella '85*, which she and Andy had written together. Milligan squabbled with her husband and eventually became totally unglued. "I got very upset, because he called me a bitch and started twisting my arm backstage."

The Troupe and all its demands had exacted a heavy toll on Milligan. "Andy bit off more than he could chew," said Norman Beim. "The fact that things had to be done his way was his own punishment. No one could work with him, so as a result he had to do everything - and he was killing himself. He was exhausted - mentally, physically, and emotionally."

Milligan began cracking up. One night Ron Keith found him prowling the theater, "backward and forward, pacing like an animal." Andy begged Keith for company - "Would you go out with me? I walk up and down, up and down, and I can hardly breathe."

Rosemary Egan believed he was in the middle of a breakdown. "He said, 'I gotta get out of here, I gotta get outta here.' He was shaking with anxiety attacks. He couldn't even take a bus over - I had to go get him and bring

him home. He was very depressed, wanted out of New York. Very, very sick ... all his so-called friends let him down." Olcott nursed him back to health and got him to Canada for surgery on a hernia Milligan had ignored for years.

Milligan's anger wasn't strictly reserved for actors. He fought constantly with the street people. Scott Means watched him pulverize a drag queen in front of the Troupe. "It looked like the thing was pullin' out a gun, and he smacked the shit out of her. Everybody in the area knew who Andy was - they knew to stay away from him. They thought he was insane."

For Dennis Malvasi, 39th Street was turning into just another war zone. "During intermission you'd have to swing it out with these people at the door. I mean literally *fisticuffs*. Me and Andy in the middle of the block, goin' to blows with, like, two or three street people as the audience came out. It was amazing. Andy kept battling life. I saw him dukin' it out with three big guys, man ... the guy was insane. When I looked at Andy I saw an old man with his fist up, punching the elements."

When a Con Ed employee came by one day to check the meter, Andy pummeled him in the chest with a claw hammer. Then Milligan was robbed at gunpoint by two men who broke into the theater. "He got tied up, smacked around. I figured a fellow like that could use a weapon," said Malvasi, who gave Andy an eight-shot rifle. "I said, 'Why don't you take this baby, just blast caps? Just make sure you don't report it to the police ... throw the body out the window.'"

Once armed, Milligan became trigger-happy. Malvasi watched in amazement as Andy cheerfully shot at car thieves from his Troupe battle station. "Yeah, he'd stick that ol' gun out there and start bangin' away. I said, 'Andy, please - make sure if you're gonna shoot people, keep the gun *in* the window. 'Cause they're gonna see a flare and know where it's comin' from.' He'd say, 'Never mind, babe.' Pow, pow! He was like an old pirate, man."

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DENNIS WOULD DIE FOR YOU. He died a million times in Vietnam. All this stupidity wrapped up with all this brilliance. He knows opera,

knows all your classical music. Self-taught. He amazes me. He's raw, an unpolished gem. We were very close.

He sends bibles to kids all over the world. This is his big thing, sending bibles to underprivileged kids. He's a street kid, comes from the worst section of Brooklyn. He doesn't let anybody in Brooklyn know he's an actor. Got knife wounds on his back, Vietnam. If he's got a dollar, you'll get fifty cents, yet he'll go help a Mafia friend bury somebody they've killed. He's Jekyll and Hyde.

He's very close to the Cardinals - he won't even tell me who they were - but he's with the top echelon in New York City - who the hell do you think put him up to the bombings? Yet they walk away with white gloves on ... the fuckin' Catholic Church.

Three times I had break-ins at the Troupe - twice with a knife at my throat and once with a gun to my head. They took what they thought was everything, but I never kept any money in the place. It was scary the first time. But then you hate so much you'll kill if you have the chance.

Then one night the front door had been busted in. It was just before dusk and I knew they'd be back. I sat on the steps with that eight-shot rifle and two blacks walked in. I got one in the kneecap and one in the shoulder. I would've killed them and buried them in the cellar if I'd hit any better. Dennis would've helped me bury them if I'd killed them. ... I knew if I'd gone any further in New York City I would be killing somebody on 39th Street.

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Theater's harder than movies. I would never do it again. I coerced all these people into coming in to get this thing together.

The Troupe used to be a speakeasy. A couple of gangsters were killed there. The floor was still wet the day of the opening. I was gonna name one of the theaters the Cino Theater but I never got around to it. We had high hopes. You have to operate a year or two before you get grant

money and it looked like we were gonna get it. Promises, empty promises. That was before Reagan. Then all the theaters in New York fell apart. Two theaters, fifty-two productions a year. It was like being in jail - running both box offices, staggered two minutes apart ... I'd run the show, too. It was very rough. You could never go out to dinner or do anything. Two hundred and fifty productions in seven years, puttin' 'em up and tearing 'em down. The Troupe was like being in jail.

I never slept in New York City for the seven years I had the theater because of worrying about the building, the fuckin' noise, and the killings ... I saw the sanitation department come around and strip cars. First time they loosen the bolts, second time they take the tires. One snowy night I was in a doorway and I saw the Port Authority cops - they're the worst assholes in the world because they can't make other police forces - they took a bum, threw him up in the air, let him land on his head, and walked away laughing.

I saw *the worst* in New York City. I saw two muggings within two hours at the same subway stop on 14th Street. Then, at rush hour outside Port Authority, damn if I didn't see a black guy in a business suit sitting between two cars - with people going by, two crosstown buses - *shitting* because all the toilets are closed. That was it. [*"I think if it had been a white guy takin' a shit, it might've been different," said Hal Borske. "Andy might've invited him over."*] **A guy sitting there defecating! A perfect advertisement for New York. I said, "What am I doing here? This is masochism."**

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Andy Milligan decided he'd turn his life around by escaping to California. "He hated New York," recalled Scott Means. "It was always, 'When I get out to California, babe, I'm gonna have non-alcoholic punch and sugar cookies and invite people over.' He talked about California constantly - it was the only thing on his mind. He'd walk down the streets and say, 'See this crack in the street, babe? There's not a crack in the whole city of Los Angeles. *No cracks*. You go to a diner, you have to put your hand over the cup, because they keep wanting to refill it.'"

Milligan closed down the Troupe so the building could go on the auction block. Although squabbles with shareholders delayed the sale and Milligan had to squat in the building for months without heat or running water, the property was eventually sold for $325,000 and shareholders made out very well on Andy's pipe dream. Milligan, who held the most shares, attached a $50,000 fee for his seven years of labor - he'd live off the $l,000 monthly payments from the sale for years - but even those who had reason to be furious with Andy couldn't begrudge him. "He earned every penny he got out of that building," said Norman Beim.

Milligan almost didn't make it out of the Big Apple alive. Obligated to empty the building before turning over the keys, he enlisted Hal Borske, Dennis Malvasi, and Ron Keith - about the only people connected to the Troupe who would still talk to him. But the truck driver Andy hired to haul away the two huge dumpsters of wreckage they'd pulled from the theater showed up late.

The trucker was a huge lug who towered over Andy and could have squashed him like a bug. And he was, as luck would have it, black. Ron Keith recalled the explosion that happened next. "Andy just jumped on him 'Where the *fuck* have *you* been?' The guy says, 'I stopped for breakfast.' And Andy said, 'You stopped for breakfast on *my* time, you cocksucker??? I'm not paying you! Where's my gun, I'm gonna blow your fucking head off!'" But somehow Milligan managed to get out of town without murdering anyone and, although he had lived his entire life without a driver's license, was soon on the road to the Promised Land. Who was at the wheel? None other than the Mad Bomber, one step ahead of the law. "Here I am on the lam, right?" recalled Malvasi."I had a hot license from another charge, I got things goin' down all around. I got New York City police lookin' for me *and* I got feds lookin' for me. But y'know, life's theater to me. I really don't care where my stage is." [*As this book was going to press, Dennis Malvasi made international headlines again. It was Malvasi who unwittingly led authorities to James Kopp, a fugitive on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list. Kopp - known in anti-abortion circles as 'Atomic Dog' - was arrested in France after a two-year search on March 30, 2001. He is the primary suspect in the sniper murder of Amhurst, New York, abortion doctor Dr.*

Barnett A. Slepian, shot down in front of his wife and children after returning home from a synagogue service. Kopp is also wanted by Canadian authorities for allegedly wounding a doctor there in 1995, and is a suspect in three other shootings.

After leaving federal prison in 1992, Malvasi had returned to eastern New York and married Loretta Clair Marra, another pro-life extremist (and whose father, Fordham University philosophy professor William Marra, ran for President on the Right-to-Life ticket in 1988). The FBI alleges the couple - living under aliases with their two children - had been communicating with Kopp (who had fled the U.S.) through pay phone calls and coded e-mails, sending him money while planning to sneak him back into the States.

Wiretaps, bugs, and intercepted e-mail emanating from Malvasi's apartment led to the location and arrest of Kopp in a tiny French village. On March 31, 2001, Malvasi - described by the New York Times *as "one of the most violent abortion foes in the history of New York City" and his wife were charged with harboring, concealing, and aiding the flight of a fugitive. If convicted on all counts, Malvasi and his wife each face up to ten years in prison and $250,000 in fines.*

The charges saddened Linda Mussman, the theater director who had first discovered Malvasi in 1970. "He was so tremendously talented," she told Daily News *reporter Michael Daly. "Dennis could have had a very different life. He just couldn't get past his past."*]

Milligan and Malvasi made it to Los Angeles in under four days. "Me and Andy, man, we booked. I drove twenty hours at a time. Andy pointed out all the wild things on the side of the road – I learned my flowers. He showed me what a cow looked like."

Once Andy was safe in California, Malvasi turned right around and headed back to Manhattan. As much as he wanted to see Hollywood, he had a "business goin' on in New York - I was more interested in blowin' up clinics." He'd never see Andy again.

Nearing sixty, Andy Milligan had finally arrived in Hollywood, a renewed man. He loved the unchanging climate - Andy could grow his beloved roses year-round. And he'd finally find love on the streets of Tinseltown. Most exciting of all, he'd dust off his ancient camera, load it full of fading short ends, and crank out a few very crazy last movies. The happiness was brief, though, as Milligan headed into his tragic final act. And I'd be right in the middle of it all.

PART IV

HOLLYWOOD

1985-1991

11

THE HAPPY ORGAN

"KUNG FU FAN KARATE CHOPPED TO DEATH," shrieked the 1985 *New York Post* headline. Bloodshed on the Deuce: during a showing of *The Last Dragon* at the Apollo, one patron had beaten another senseless after the man complained he couldn't get by the other guy's feet, which were propped up on the seat in front of him, blocking the aisle. The sixty year-old victim staggered out to the theater lobby and collapsed.

By the mid-eighties, Times Square had become a much rougher place, largely due to the advent of crack. This cheap, highly addictive nightmare drug changed the area overnight. People on the street were a lot more aggressive, a lot more insane.

The theaters were falling apart, and home video had made a huge dent in their market. The novelty of porno had worn off long ago, and sex theaters were now havens for drug deals as well as sexual activity. Increasing AIDS paranoia meant continual crackdowns from undercover vice cops, and by the late eighties such venerable Big Apple sleazepits as the Cine 14, the Variety Photoplays, the Cameo, the Metropolitan, and the Capri had all shuttered their doors due to alleged drug and / or prostitution violations. All this was adroitly exploited by political forces out to further big-money plans for renovation shepherded by the 42nd Street Development Project and State Urban Development Corporation. AIDS and crack were the nails in the coffin of 42nd Street.

The old guard was vanishing. In 1985, 42nd Street movie-biz honchos Bernard "Bingo" Brandt and Marty Levine both died at age seventy-five of heart attacks, and by the mid-nineties Chellee Wilson and a host of others would also be gone. (William Mishkin died in 1997.) And motion pictures

had evolved (or perhaps "devolved") as well. Changing mores allowed major studios to delve more and more into areas previously considered taboo and relegated to the no-man's-land of exploitation.

Even gore was absorbed by the mainstream. The monster success of such late seventies / early eighties shock franchises as *Halloween, Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* meant big money and more involvement from the majors - and less and less room for authentic indies like Mishkin. How could a Mishkin compete when his entire budget was what the majors spent on just a few of their hyperreal effects? As a result, audiences had gotten harder to please. Kids no longer wanted to sit through old-school drive-in movies with rubber hands and real people.

"They were this corner store," said Straw Weisman of the Mishkins. "The thing they did was make something out of nothing for very little money - and then make an enormous return on it. It stopped being easy to do."

But the advent of home video actually gave Mishkin - and Andy Milligan - a slight respite from the boneyard, however brief. With the explosion of video stores in the mid-eighties, demand for quick, cheap product was high. And so Lew Mishkin and Andy Milligan rekindled their hate for one another.

Milligan had opened the inevitable dress shop upon landing in Hollywood sometime in late 1985 or early 1986, this one on Highland Boulevard. Working alongside Andy was a Hawaiian drag queen who frequently sported a shiner from her rough-trade beau. As John Miranda recalled, Andy spent thousands fixing up the place, then filled it with "all these awful olive colored dresses. Andy sat there all day." The shop quickly faded away. "I got bored," said Milligan.

Then out of the blue came a phone call from Lew. "He just said, 'You wanna do a film?' I said, 'No!' A few weeks later I figured, 'Well - might as well do something.'"

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In the early eighties I was working in the film business in New York City and was also involved with a noxious publication called *Sleazoid Express* (original run, 1980-1985), a misanthropic little homemade magazine whose obsessive viewpoint on exploitation pictures was truly unique. At first *Sleazoid* was mainly reviews of exploitation flotsam past and present, expertly written by editor and ex-Staten Islander William Z. Landis, who lived in a crummy dive on 14th Street - a stone's throw from one of Milligan's favorite sex theaters, the Metropolitan. But for better or worse I provoked Bill into making the rag more personal, and, sometimes aided by a third collaborator who went by the monicker Buggin' Out, *Sleazoid* embarked on a humorous, not to mention disturbing, journey through the slime that tainted all our lives. We became sociological scum-gatherers, not realizing that by carelessly handling each bacteria-filled sample we were becoming hopelessly infected ourselves.

Sleazoid wasn't interested in any hapless attempt to justify exploitation films by mainstream terms - we knew this stuff was toxic, which is precisely what made it compelling. At the same time, if one adjusted expectations and viewed the pictures in the context of the crass gutter culture that it oozed from - i.e. loose on the Deuce at midnight, high out of one's mind, and, like the rest of the zombies, unconcerned that the sound was barely audible and one of the reels was in Spanish - unmitigated crap like *The Love Butcher* or *Pink Motel* could induce a derangement of the senses that was actually quite sublime.

Sleazoid's petty universe revolved mainly around a quartet of locales the decrepit grindhouses of 42nd Street, the depraved porno theaters of East 14th Street, and the corresponding New Jersey movie cesspools of Newark and Jersey City (most memorably a bleak, concrete-and-pothole no-man's land called the Newark Drive-In). We were witnessing the final hurrah of these ancient attractions. Every day, it seemed, another theater was closed, demolished, or turned into a bland twelveplex.

Landis had an encyclopedic knowledge of exploitation. He also had a knack for lining up a dazzling row of grindhouse one-sheets on the long brick wall in his apartment, and one day *Fleshpot on 42nd Street* was tacked there. I was transfixed, immediately becoming obsessed with Milligan, with whom

Landis had conducted the first in-depth interview for a nerdy, forgettable horror film mag in 1982. Milligan was an auteur *Sleazoid* heartily endorsed. Together Bill and I ventured to the Troupe Theater to see a few of Andy's plays, which I wrote about for *Sleazoid* in mid-1983.

Dressed in a wool cap and tattered Goodwill ensemble I recall being of the loud, plaid variety, Milligan was gracious but wary when he took our admission at the door. Chiding Bill over the *Sleazoid* name (which, characteristically, he found distasteful), Andy seemed like a weary curmudgeon. I kept my distance. But soon I began to research Milligan's life, eventually interviewing hundreds of people who had worked with him.

In the days before home video unearthed any and everything containing sprocket holes, actually seeing a Milligan picture was tantamount to a Bigfoot sighting, and one had to be a bit of a detective to accomplish anything.

I can remember arranging a clandestine 42nd Street meeting with Milligan's ex-partner Phil Todaro to procure a pristine print of *Vapors* for the princely sum of seventy-five bucks (no doubt he saw me as a sucker ready to be fleeced). I wistfully recall the first time I saw a Milligan picture on the big screen - on vacation with a girlfriend, I noticed a thumbnail ad for an hours-away inner-city Washington, D.C., grindhouse playing *The Rats Are Coming*. We drove like bats out of hell to make the final show and entered the Howard Theater shaking with excitement, as if we had stumbled upon an invitation-only showing of Von Stroheim's *Greed*. The other four patrons in this drafty, flea-bitten dump didn't even look up from their alcoholic stupor as the tattered print began to flicker upon the discolored screen. As wild as Andy's movies look on video, it's nothing compared to how strange they appeared twenty feet high. Picture the sort of microscopic illustration of some garish, powder-wigged fop you find adorning some historical stamp then imagine it crudely blown up to the size of a roadside billboard. The grain looked big enough to fill a wheelbarrow.

By the time I got up the courage (and felt I knew enough) to interview Milligan, he was already sunning himself in California, and so I began calling him regularly for phone interviews. It was during one of these

conversations in mid-1987 that Andy casually asked if I wanted to come to Hollywood and work on his next movie. I didn't hesitate for a second. At the time I had just gotten my union card and was working as a sound editor for the likes of Brian DePalma and Sidney Lumet, but I found the world of big-budget films about as exciting as a shoe factory. When I told my peers I was heading out to Hollywood to work for the man responsible for *Guru, the Mad Monk* and *Torture Dungeon*, they thought I had lost my mind.

Joining me for the ride was one Charlie Beesley. He had written for a rival publication on exploitation films, and his droll, precise tone was the only good thing about the dispassionate rag. Beesley was an unsung East Village hero who'd try anything once, from playing drums to chauffeuring hookers to editing film to fetching coffee for Carly Simon. He was quiet, handsome, and wickedly funny, and everybody fell in love with him, male and female. As assistant cameraman, he'd become an integral part of Andy's crew. I'd work the slate, although I'd never tackled it before.

I thought I had Andy all scoped out. I'd interviewed a zillion of his associates, heard all the stories. He was screaming at me within thirty minutes of our arrival that first day of the Monstrosity shoot. I had dropped a light bulb, smashing it. The total cost, under a dollar. Andy acted as if the entire production was now in jeopardy.

A few days later he curtly handed me a spool of 35mm film. As I unrolled it and held it up to the light, I saw that it was footage of me clapping the slate and walking out of frame - Andy just wanted to emphasize how many frames I was wasting each take. For some unknown reason, when he was really peeved, he'd call me Queen Victoria. It sent me through the roof, which amused Milligan no end.

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Upon arriving on the *Monstrosity* set, I met the three people who pretty much made up Andy's inner circle in Hollywood. First came John Miranda, whose craggy countenance I immediately recognized from *Bloodthirsty Butchers*. Since then, Miranda had gone on to a successful career as

character actor and acting teacher. His lean Midwestern preacher presence had graced everything from TV commercials to Ugly Kid Joe videos.

Miranda had been minding his own business one night, watching himself on TV in an episode of *Murder, She Wrote*, when the phone went dingaling. "Hi, babe, it's Andy," said the voice. "Andy *Milligan*?" he responded, shocked.

Miranda hadn't seen or heard from Milligan since 1970, and here he was acting like he'd run into John in the grocery the day before. Andy was calling to congratulate him on his TV performance, adding that he was living just a few blocks away. The two went out for coffee, rekindling their friendship, and Milligan announced he was getting back in the picture business. "Andy, I don't think Hollywood's ready for you," quipped John. Sly, reserved, and one of the very few people who took none of Andy's shit, Miranda would play a central role in Milligan's California years as well as appearing in Andy's final pictures, *The Weirdo* and *Surgikill.*

Accompanying Miranda was his *Bloodthirsty* co-star, Frank Echols, a large Southern gentleman with a silvery pompadour and mustache whose thick black eyeglass frames always seemed to be halfway down the bridge of his long nose. An extremely warm personality, Echols was a scream as Andy's script girl. Both Beesley and I lived for the sound of Frank - rolling his eyes over some psycho stunt Milligan had just pulled - gently admonishing the director in a measured, haughty, imperious drawl, "But *Annnnnnnnndy* ..."

Last, but certainly not least, was Milligan's roommate and boyfriend, Bobby Wayne Keeton.

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Twenty years Andy's junior, Wayne Keeton was a human toothpick with inelegant, oversized hands and feet. He had a jack-o'-lantern head and jug handle ears, dim, glassy eyes, and a leering grin with widely spaced pegs that passed for teeth. At times Wayne reminded me of that tragic genetic misfit of forties film, Rhondo Hatton. I thought Keeton was beautiful, unique. He could have stumbled out of the pages of one of Andy's scripts - the noble savage, the simpleton with a heart of gold. "Like Shaw's

Pygmalion, from the gutter," said Andy proudly. "And a fuck machine, babe - ten-inch dick." Upon introduction, Keeton would invariably hand you some evil shit stained stuffed animal rescued from God knows what dumpster, then, excitedly, in that somewhat indecipherable Louisiana drawl of his, tell you how he was related to Diane Keaton. And Buster Keaton. Or was it Michael? Every time you saw Wayne, the story changed. And grew. "Most money ah ever had was $37,000," he once told me. "In New Orleans. Ah stole it off a blind nigger when he wasn't lookin'. Left town, forgot where ah went. Spent most of it on booze."

Wayne Keeton was "full of bullshit," as his friend Fred Conwell said. "That was either a problem, or it made it interesting." Keeton grew up dirt poor in Louisiana and Texas, raised by his mother and a grandmother. Mentally "slow," his childhood was chaotic. "You know his brother blew his brains out on Christmas?" Milligan asked one day.

"He was thirteen, his brother seventeen. They were around for Christmas presents under the tree and the brother came out and said, 'I have a present for everybody' and blew his brains out in front of them all. His grandmother kept the presents until this year - she was gonna open them, but she donated them to Goodwill."

There was talk of an older fellow being arrested after sweeping a barely pubescent Wayne across state lines for immoral purposes. "Mah first boyfrien'," said Keeton proudly. Bobby Wayne took to wandering the Deep South, acquiring and then dumping a wife and child somewhere along the way.

He became a fixture at Mary's, a well-known Houston leather dive, before somehow migrating West. Wayne was a hustler - "the soft-sell type," said Conwell, who first met him panhandling outside a 7-Eleven. Andy Milligan spotted him washing dishes at a dump in the Valley that was "closed five days later by the board of health for selling donkey-dick burritos," said John Miranda. "You're comin' with us," Andy barked at Wayne. "OK!" said Keeton, throwing down his apron.

It was, as Miranda put it, "a match made in purgatory." Much to Andy's dismay, Keeton liked his alcohol. Wayne got a monthly disability check for $650, but would "go through that in three days," said Andy. "He'd go on a drunk, get promiscuous, or make a pass at a cop". Sometimes Milligan bailed him out, sometimes he didn't, but Wayne always came back. "They were an interesting pair," said Conwell. "Andy treated him like a son, a nasty little boy. That was their thing."

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Milligan rented half of a small white duplex bungalow at 1201 N. Orange Avenue, just a stone's throw from hustler central on Santa Monica Boulevard. Much of *Monstrosity* was shot there - or out back in a cramped, tiny garage. We spent many sweltering hours there under the hot lights, knocking out page after page of script amidst mountains of dirty stuffed animals, rubber hands, and an aquarium full of cow brains. Smoke effects were created by Frank Echols taking a drag off a cig, then exhaling through a long piece of tubing. It was beyond seedy. And a million laughs. Basically Andy did everything, and we made sure he didn't keel over or kill someone intentionally or otherwise.

Everybody got a turn in front of the camera, including Wayne playing a street dealer selling to Beesley just before getting his throat ripped open by the monster. Wayne later told me his seconds-long, nonspeaking celluloid death debut was the "happiest time of my life."

My chance at stardom came when Andy needed pick-up shots for the "climax" where the monster sets fire to the lab - it was too expensive to fly Hal back. With all I knew about Milligan and his legendary disregard for safety, I certainly should've known better. I donned Frankie's calfskin vest, fright wig, and ski boots with homemade six-inch platforms added by Andy, then hobbled around the tiny garage, swinging a gas can as the flames shot up around me. By the time the take was over, I couldn't see my hands through the smoke. The crew and I burst through the doors, coughing and sputtering for air. Andy had nearly killed me! I was really part of the gang now.

For our work on the picture Beesley and I were each paid one hundred bucks cash at the end of the day back at Andy's house. Milligan frequently forgot which dusty book he had hidden the loot in and would rampage through them all, throwing the ones that held no bank on the floor. When shooting was completed, Charlie and I helped in the editing room alongside Frank Echols. Andy had rented a cavernous space on Sunset Boulevard in Silver Lake to serve as his production headquarters.

"Troupe West," as it came to be called, was a dingy hellhole. Formerly a Latino drag bar, then a punk club, it was a huge barren room with a balcony above one side and a crude, fading mural of a curvaceous Spanish bombshell down the other. No windows, no ventilation, teeming with flies - this is where Andy edited *Monstrosity*.

For a while, Beesley was foolhardy enough to sleep there. Wayne would padlock him in at night, barging in the following morning shouting, "Dang a-lang lang, Beesley! Rise 'n' shine!" Then Wayne would hunker down on the floor and start hammering on scraps of wood, tunelessly humming "Tie a Yellow Ribbon 'Round the Old Oak Tree" or some other wretched pop oldie as he pummeled away.

Milligan's editing equipment consisted of an upright Moviola, some worn-out white gloves, and old grease pencils, plus a prehistoric optical sound head for listening to track. One day I got so frustrated with Andy's refusal to rent a real squawk box I threw the reader across the room, but my histrionics failed to make an impression. I was the big expert, but it was I who somehow managed to fuck up the negative cutting on *Monstrosity*. Andy had to redo the splices and pay out of his own pocket for costly repairs. It was a stupid, deadly mistake. Inexplicably, Andy never chastised me for it.

We broke down the takes onto cores. I'd offer up all three takes of a scene to Andy, assuming he'd want to peruse them, but no. "If we shot three, babe, the first two are no good," he'd say, tearing the film with his teeth and throwing the rejects onto the filthy floor. *Monstrosity* was stitched together in a hurry, with the only excitement occurring when Andy exploded at Frank Echols over his alleged drinking. "I can smell it coming out of your

pores, Frank! Milligan pays for a hundred percent, not seventy-five!" Echols rolled his eyes and padded off toward the bus stop, no doubt relieved to be finished for the day.

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The finished *Monstrosity* was, I'm afraid, just that. Hal Borske plays Frankie, a body-parts golem brought to life by three medical students out to avenge a girlfriend's rape. They try to train the monster to be a killing machine, but he's actually a docile innocent who falls in love with a damaged drug addict named Jamie. When Frankie's creators snuff Jamie with an overdose of "crystal," Frankie goes on a murderous rampage with a machine gun.

The final scene finds Frankie lounging on a bus stop bench in the sun, swapping stories with a bag lady who asks, "So whaddaya gonna do now?" "I dunno," says Frankie. "It's a big country. I've been readin' and I've been thinkin'. Maybe I'll be like you, Agnes, and just walk around." The camera tilts up to the sky, then we hear Frank Echols announce, "Cut! Print! That's a wrap!" The camera jerks back down to reveal crew members tearing down the shot as the actors mingle, vowing to stay in touch. An odd, quizzical coda.

Monstrosity oozes a certain pained, not-too-with-it zaniness (think of a poverty-row, no-stars version of Otto Preminger's *Skidoo*), but its fascinations are fleeting, with plenty of breathing space in between. The movie's main musical theme is a very eighties drum motif - bu bum, ba ba *bum* - cheap, unrelenting, and brainless. There are "suspenseful" montages of wiggling stuffed toys; New York import Charlie Prior in bad wig, shades, and painted-on mustache desperately miming panic as he waits to get killed; and the nameless stripper who came in for a bit part as Prior's pal's mistress and gave the most heartfelt performance in the movie.

Then there is Joel Weiss's maddening turn as Frankie's leather-helmeted guardian angel. It was a revelation watching Milligan sweat through take after take of a long monologue inexplicably assigned to Weiss, face-to-face

with the grim realization that his only alternative to infinite patience was murder.

Monstrosity may be Andy's best released picture since 1972's *Fleshpot*, but that's not saying much. Milligan's eager but faceless Hollywood SAG misfits were no substitute for his hand-picked New York eccentrics, and his stuffy, old-school theatricality and aged-in-wood slapstick add up to little more than frumpiness in the end.

As fun as it was to make and to be a part of the Andy experience, his heart just didn't seem to be in it. He hired people to do the stills and gore effects, and bent to the ideas of others. "I don't really enjoy filmmaking anymore," he'd tell me over and over. "I find it extremely hard work now."

And while Andy's California pictures have a certain mellowed optimism, it feels forced and ersatz compared to the rabid emotions of his earlier work. Although *Monstrosity* sometimes has a crazed energy, Milligan's three Hollywood movies are somewhat empty at heart.

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Lew Mishkin was, of course, considered the absolute villain of *Monstrosity*. Although largely unseen, Milligan cursed his name every chance he got. Apparently their first big blowout had come during casting. "I kept telling the girls, 'There's a rape, but there's no nudity,'" recalled Andy. "After telling the third girl that, Mishkin closed the door and said, 'Don't tell them that because there's gonna be nudity.' I said, *'No, there's not!* That was our *whole* arrangement - *no nudity on the lead girls*.' "

Milligan resurrected the old nudity squabble from *Supercool*, and things went downhill from there. "We started screaming at each other and he walked out. Very unpleasant. The next day we had a fight and the third day we had another fight. He had to go to a cardiologist." [*Funnily enough, producer Neva Friedenn later admitted to me that she was the "nurse" that called Milligan - Lew's "heart trouble" was all just a ruse to get Andy's attention. Mishkin made a point concerning the fight. "It was sort of strange that Andy started off making sex films. In the end, he got very uncomfortable having any kind of sex in any of his films."*]

When Mishkin did show up on the set, I have to say that he was hardly the bogeyman I expected. Observing a dialogue scene in progress one rainy day in Andy's cramped garage, Mishkin - obviously worried about the soundtrack - gently pointed out that the rain coming down on the tin roof sounded like bullets. Andy exploded. "That's it, Lew! You're ruining the movie! You're *ruining the movie*!"

There are a raft of letters from Lew to Andy documenting their disputes. I thought Mishkin made himself very clear on all points, telling Andy point blank what he expected from him and doing his best to communicate fairly. It didn't matter. By the end of the picture Andy was ready to kill.

I remember getting a call early one Sunday morning from a sputtering, frothing-at-the-mouth Milligan, who claimed he had a can of gas in his hand and was ready to set the negative on fire. A series of intense communications between Lew and Andy ensued, with me acting as middleman.

Somehow I managed to shepherd an uneasy truce between producer and director, but I must admit I still feel guilty over a little prank Hal and I cooked up on Andy's behalf for the final crew shot of *Monstrosity* - it's audible on the track if you listen closely. I walk over to Hal and ask if he remembers the name of the central character in Dostoyevski's *The Idiot*. "Myshkin," Hal dutifully responds. A few seconds later Lew - resplendent in an eighties track-suit ensemble - walks into the shot to congratulate the actors, blissfully unaware. When Andy heard it in the editing room he was gleeful, like a kid at Christmas.

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Andy seemed happiest going for long night drives down Santa Monica, eye balling the hustlers in the stagnant haze. Shadowy figures on street corners - it was like a dream. As an oldies station blared such evocative nuggets as "Wipeout," "Nights in White Satin," or an Andy favorite, Dave "Baby" Cortez's giddy, exuberantly infantile keyboard instrumental "The Happy Organ," we'd whizz by Oki Dog, Astro Burger, and an endless parade of

men for sale, Milligan expounding on ethnic distinctions. "Mexicans - no dicks, babe."

It seemed a rather desperate time to be doing this, as people were dying left and right of AIDS. Some of the hustlers looked obviously sick - sunken-cheeked doom-boys flashing baskets of death - but Andy seemed oblivious, at least for the moment.

It never failed. The ugliest caveman on the block and Andy would start salivating. The more toothless, swaybacked, and degenerate, the more Milligan would practically crawl out the window to get at them. One night - miles down the road - we spotted what appeared to be a female hooker trolling her wares. "Nope, babe - sex change," muttered Andy, not even squinting. Upon closer inspection, he was dead right. Milligan had X-ray vision when it came to the street.

One day a wealthy, decadent acquaintance of mine landed in town and wanted to check out the leather bars. Andy demanded we dress for the affair, so he outfitted us all in ill-fitting getups - ridiculous hats and vests more appropriate for the car wash scene in *Monstrosity*.

The dives we visited sported the usual blaring disco and prowling leather men, all well-oiled on some combo of booze and poppers. Andy seemed most comfortable in a country-western joint with sawdust on the floor, but profoundly uptight about having his biographer present. Looking back, I was slumming. Was I really learning anything about his life, or just intruding into Andy's playpen to give it the white glove test?

But as we milled around one sweaty dump, Milligan put me in my place. He unexpectedly put his hand on my shoulder, then started forcefully rubbing my neck. In the thousands of hours I had been around Andy, he'd never once touched me, and the effect was unsettling. For all my muttering about "research," there were some areas where even devils fear to tread and I wasn't about to be cornholed by Cap'n Andy. Milligan just laughed.

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Monstrosity was a bust. It remains unreleased, even on video. Supposedly the first of a two-picture deal, the end product, not to mention the vicious quarrels with Lew, torched all that. I returned to the East Coast soon after the shoot. Andy wound up making his next film for Neva Friedenn, an associate of Mishkin's who was regarded as a kung fu movie expert and was also one of the screenwriters of the 1978 Cameron Mitchell driller-killer "vehicle" *The Toolbox Murders.*

Friedenn was a real angel who wanted to do right by Milligan. Her company, Green Tiger Pictures, tried to drag him into the modern world by utilizing a modern campaign, an actual score, plus sound and optical effects - not to mention casting leads that were acceptably attractive by current standards. Unfortunately, the resulting 1989 release, *The Weirdo*, a "remake" of the picture Andy had lost back around 1970, was mostly a bland, undistinguished creation that only made one long to see the original version.

The fact that the casting choices weren't his own - likewise for a tacked on ambiguous ending leaving room for a *Weirdo II* - made Milligan's blood boil. He was especially cruel on *The Weirdo* set, reducing at least one person to tears. "Andy hated the actors," said Frank Echols. "The boy playing the lead? Andy screamed at him every day, to the point of no return."

According to Beesley, one of the producers was "a useless cog in these ridiculous Carlo Ponti shades - huge, rounded-off squares." The *Weirdo* mogul was obsessed with minute script corrections. "Anytime anybody replaced 'the' with 'a' you'd hear an eraser, then penciling in. He never stopped. On location the notebook was flapping in the wind. Andy was going completely berserk."

Transportation from Silver Lake to the Santa Monica and Topanga Canyon locations proved to be a nightmare for Milligan's crew. As usual, nobody had wheels. And in the middle of the shoot, Andy had a whale of a row with Wayne.

It seems there was an extension cord left lying in the street and Andy blamed Wayne, tearing him a new asshole. Keeton walked off and pouted for about twenty minutes, then came back, threw his keys at soundman Scott Means, and dramatically announced he was leaving - for good. Andy kept filming. "I told him Wayne had left," said Means. "He didn't even care."

That night Keeton fell off the wagon, barging into Troupe West, where Beesley was spending the night. "Wayne came in completely shitfaced and said, 'Well, I went to the DA's office on the way home and I'm suing everybody. *Monstrosity* will never come out, because I never signed a release.'"

Milligan quickly made amends by footing the bill for a thousand-dollar diamond ring for Wayne. He then threw a party for Keeton, inviting all the leather-bar flotsam. "Andy got mad because they were all stoned," said Frank Echols, who recalled Wayne all dolled up in a "white ice-cream suit" showing off the gaudy rock on his finger. "He looked like a Southern colonel."

"That ring's worth a thousan' dollars," announced an overcome Wayne to Andy.

"I told you, Wayne," said Milligan.

"Yeah, but I had it *appraised*," muttered Wayne, who added he had paid five bucks for the estimate.

Not that it was all kiss and make up. One night when Keeton wound up drunk in some booze hall, Milligan sprang for a taxi. "Wayne then proceeds to steal fifty bucks from him and goes back out again," recalled Echols. "So Andy threw him out. John and I saw him cruising Santa Monica Boulevard. I said, 'Do not pause. Keep on going.' I turned my head and we drove right on by. Wayne was out there peddling his ass on the corner."

***

By the time *The Weirdo* was completed, Andy had once again burned all bridges and needed a brand-new set of suckers - ahem, producers. Enter

John Van Harlingen and his wife, Darlene, stage-named "Bouvier" - a middle-aged brunette who fancied herself an actress, having played a mumbling victim in *Monstrosity.* Milligan was going to make her a star. Rounding out the production end was one Sid Caplan. "Sid was alright, but Andy treated him like an absolute dog," said Frank Echols.

A hospital-set black comedy based on an outside script that Milligan added last-minute rewrites to, "*Surgikill* was a starring vehicle for fabulous Darlene," said Beesley, who watched as the director quickly turned on his leading lady, flustering her so badly that none of her takes matched in the editing room. "She and Andy were screaming at each other," said Echols. "It was just the worst. He treated her like garbage, just telling her how terrible she was - and this was almost every day, because she was in half the movie." The supporting cast was the lowest end of show-biz flotsam. "One kid was in the circus three years," said Beesley. "Every chance he gets, he's standing on his head in the middle of the floor singing 'Hound Dog.'"

The movie was shot in 1988 at an abandoned neighborhood clinic near downtown LA. Outfitted in a crisp, new LAPD cap, Wayne stepped in as caterer, supplying burnt fish sticks and "these awful, moldy bologna sandwiches," as Frank Echols recalled. Since his power play on *The Weirdo*, Keeton now fancied himself a big cheese. "Wayne is Lil' Andy now," Beesley told me at the time. "Mr. Official. He's ordering everybody around 'Everybody onna set, everybody onna set!'"

Surgikill was the last film Andy would ever make. An endless string of sex / shit / showbiz jokes, this movie is utterly painful to sit through. Stab a pitchfork through my throat, set my hump on fire, spit into my mouth, but please - don't force me to dwell on the non-existent plot. I'd rather not remember Andy as a gay, gutter-trash Benny Hill. The only notable thing about *Surgikill* is that its hospital-as-torture-dungeon motif would prove grotesquely apt for Milligan's final few years.

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Andy's triumphant return to filmmaking was a complete disaster. The home video gold rush had come and gone. The market was glutted with low

budget pictures no one wanted, and Milligan's were buried at the bottom of the pile.

Andy was really in a bind now. He was quarreling with all his producers over money owed, he had no projects lined up, and he had tremendous overhead - in addition to the thousand-dollars-plus in rent he paid each month for the studio on Sunset, he now owed mortgage payments on a new property he'd bought, a stately Victorian mansion straight out of his Staten Island days not far from downtown Los Angeles at 1920 Scott Avenue. [*Once again came testimonials that Milligan's home was haunted. Wayne Keeton shuddered recalling various bumps-in-the-night and kitchen glasses that suddenly exploded in his hands*.] Milligan had a new income scheme - shooting classic plays via very low-budget video. It went nowhere. He tried to start a theater at Troupe West, but that fizzled out as well. Worst of all, Wayne was sick.

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Nobody knows exactly when Wayne Keeton was diagnosed with AIDS. It didn't come as much of a shock - he was a hustler and, according to friends, completely uninterested in any sort of safe sex. Suddenly he was taking the bus to the hospital all the time.

Milligan had a hard time handling it. Frank Echols recalled Andy blowing a fuse during a performance of *Peter Pan*. "Andy got mad because Wayne was coughing throughout the show. He'd yell, 'Shut up! Shut up!'"

Keeton made one last trek home to Louisiana, but his illness made him a pariah there. When he returned, he told people that he was made to eat off paper plates and sleep on the porch with the dogs. "It was very sad because he was saying, 'Oh, I've got to go back to Louisiana at Christmas,'" recalled Frank Echols. "Well, of course he was never gonna see another Christmas." At some point Wayne turned back to his Baptist roots. "Wayne got touched by Jesus at Norm's All-You-Can-Eat Restaurant Easter Sunday near the Hollywood Bowl," said Scott Means. Although he could barely read, he stared at the bible continually. "Wayne got very crazy toward the end," said Echols. "He had a bible under his arm all the time, stuffed animals all

around him. At the time Wayne died he had two hundred stuffed animals. It was like he was a child - but he was a child."

Visiting Keeton in the AIDS ward was unbearable for Andy. John Miranda would drive him to the hospital, and Milligan would erupt into tears before collecting himself and entering the room. The rest of the time he spent reprimanding Wayne for his bad habits or fighting with the black nurses on duty. The last day of his life, Wayne had a simple request: a hamburger. He ate one bite, then threw up. Then he asked for a cigarette, and Andy threw his usual fit. "Wayne, you promised - I'm not going to visit you if you smoke." That night, in the wee hours of June 20, 1989, Wayne "Bobby" Keeton passed away.

Nobody at the hospital phoned Andy. When he and Miranda arrived the next day, they found the bed empty. There stood one of the black nurses Andy had quarreled with.

"Where's Wayne?" murmured Andy.

"Ya mean nobody called you?" she said. "Now don't cry. Wayne's on Two." Two was the hospital morgue. Andy collapsed into her arms, sobbing, as John stood holding the bouquet Milligan had brought for Wayne's bedside.

Wayne had raised a little cat named Blackie. The runt of the litter, it was afraid of everything and everybody except Wayne. When Andy got home, the cat was lying dead, its paws outstretched toward the door to Wayne's downstairs apartment.

Andy fell apart. John Miranda had to bury the cat, get rid of Wayne's belongings, find a safe place for his diamond ring. When Hal Borske sent flowers, Andy appeared on Miranda's doorstep at eight o'clock in the morning, bouquet in hand, jitterbugging back and forth. "I can't stand them! I can't have them in the house!" he yowled, tossing the flowers at John. "You take them!" Keeton's relatives called, wanting to know whether Wayne had left any valuables behind. Andy cursed them out and hung up.

One Sunday when Miranda went to church, he was startled to see Andy the atheist sitting there. "He just cried all the way through the service," said

Frank Echols.

***

Andy began having his own health problems. Some months before Wayne's death, Andy had come down with a terrible case of shingles. Miranda and Echols found him sitting on a curb near the Hollywood Bowl, unable to walk. Andy's chest looked like somebody "had just hacked at him with a big knife," said Frank. Milligan spent a half day in the hospital before fleeing. Although shingles was known at the time to be associated with HIV, Andy preferred to blame the infection on a producer who'd screwed him out of twenty grand.

Milligan put his house on the market, then got into a huge row with the realtors. To boost Andy's spirits, John paid for a plane ticket to Hawaii. Andy stayed one or two days, spent the little cash he had, then fled for home. Somewhere on the trip he'd hurt himself, falling down in the shower. Then one night Milligan went out to see *Oklahoma!* with Miranda and suddenly charged off to the men's room. He was hemorrhaging from the rectum.

Milligan had no insurance, no money. And nobody wanted his movies anymore. "Andy doesn't know the market's passed him by," Lew Mishkin told me in 1990. "He can still do more for less money than anyone else, but what he can do is no longer acceptable." Andy had nowhere to go. "It's almost like, 'Who wants you anymore?'" said Frank Echols at the time. "That must be a terribly depressing thing for him."

Out of options, haunted by Wayne's death with his own health starting to fail him, Andy was heading down a dark road. It was at this time I landed back in California. A Really Big Celebrity I'd interviewed had sucked me back into his life, talking of a biography. The decade-plus mental mind-fuck this eccentric recluse and his handlers put me through would make Andy's sadism look like a valentine. Milligan thought it was all folly - and he turned out to be sadly correct - but in the spring of 1990 I was back to Hollywood, just in time for Andy's final curtain.

12

ROSES, JUST ROSES

One day there were no more heights to be reached. ... He wanted to go beyond ... He pleaded with me to help him get there.

- WILLIAM, IN MILLIGAN'S *COCTEAU*

SO ANDY CALLED. Andy never called, which meant something was up. He wanted to take me out on the town. Cathy Rigby was appearing in a musical version of *Peter Pan* downtown at the Pantages. An ex-gymnast in a kid's musical - just the sort of thing I'd spent a lifetime avoiding, but going with Andy could be fun. He was elated - he'd already seen it twice before with Wayne. "Oh - and babe," he said, his voice turned serious, "Can you come to the house afterward? I have some important information for you." My gut twisted as I hung up the phone. Here it comes, I thought. Andy's dying. It was June 1990.

That Saturday I hopped on the Hollywood local. As we approached the theater I nervously searched for Milligan through the filthy bus windows. Twenty minutes late - Andy will kill me, I thought. Instead, he greeted me with a serene smile.

We made our way through the elegant lobby, the only adults in sight without children in tow. Andy's withered shaking hand clutched the railing as we climbed the carpeted staircase to the balcony. He stopped numerous times to catch his breath. Clutches of boisterous eight- and ten-year-olds whizzed past us. "Oh, babe, I hope you like it," he whispered. "Rigby's so good as Peter Pan, so good."

As we sat waiting for the show to begin, Andy filled me in on the history of the Pantages - who built it, what played there, what scandals had taken place. No detail escaped him, down to the corners they'd cut redoing the curtains. "Cheap material, babe. Cheap," he said ruefully. "You can tell by the way it hangs." Poor Andy. Nothing ever measured up in this world.

When the lights went down, Andy's giddy mood returned. He knew all the dialogue, laughed at all the jokes, sang along with the songs. Peter Pan hovered near a stage window and, about to lead the children out into Neverland, began rhapsodizing about death being the biggest adventure of them all. I peeked out of the corner of my eye to see Andy shaking his head in agreement. He began to sob quietly.

Unfortunately the somber mood was broken by a couple of giggling, fidgeting children in the next row. Suddenly Andy was a fire-breathing dragon, leaping to his feet and reaming the two mothers who'd brought the kiddies. "*Jesus Christ*! Don't you two *bitches* know *anything* about raising children!?! Fucking cunts." He sat back down, muttered under his breath for a few minutes, then resumed sobbing. The entire next row sat frozen throughout the rest of the performance, too afraid to move or even utter a sound.

***

We took the bus back to the old house on Scott Avenue. Andy, shuffling with all his might, could barely climb the hill. "Tiny steps, babe - that's the way we do it in California." It was a mantra I must have heard a hundred times in the past few months. We parked our asses on his porch. I loved Milligan's porch. You could gaze out across the crappy city, and there was always a light breeze to cut the heat. He'd hung a bamboo blind, his shield against the outside world. Porch time was a bit of a ritual. We'd sit and read the paper, the silence occasionally punctuated by an outburst of profanity as Andy cursed anyone who drove by too fast or played their car radio too loud. A gaggle of very lively Latino drag queens lived across the street. Andy was always threatening to shoot them all.

As he went inside to fetch us the requisite lemonade, a blood-red sun descended behind the smoggy downtown skyline. There would be no paper reading today. No laughs. After we quietly sipped lemonade for what seemed like an eternity, Andy spoke up. "Well, babe, I'm dying." He daubed the ever-present sweat from his brow. His delivery was terse, matter of fact. "I'm dying of AIDS and in three or four weeks I'm going to kill myself."

You think you're prepared for such things. But the grim reaper never fails to pull the rug out. I tried to remain stoic - I knew that's how Andy wanted it. But by this time I had become not only fond of the old goat, I was crazy about him. We exchanged a blank, wordless glance. All I saw were dark eyes. The fact that Andy was wasting away seemed to accentuate the power of those angry orbs. As the weeks crawled by, they'd only get bigger and bigger, bloodshot blue moons full of life. They burned right through you.

Andy returned to his well-rehearsed plans. He wanted me to have all his movies, plays, and equipment; John Miranda would get the house. He wanted no one to know of his illness. John and I were just about his only links left to the outside world. He was incredibly critical of Miranda, who had been footing the bill as much as possible for Andy's existence, not to mention dealing with his fussy, impossible day-to-day requests. "John told me he's never been in love with anyone," Andy said over and over. "Never been in love - can you imagine that?"

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We fell into a familiar pattern. I'd visit every few days or I'd hop a bus down Hollywood Boulevard and we'd catch a movie, then meander over to Popeye's Chicken, where Andy would rave over the subtleties of the $2.95 special for the umpteenth time (Milligan and I were connoisseurs of the worst sort of greasy spoons). Andy's favorite haunt was a coffeeshop within walking distance of his home - the Brite Spot - where he'd chat up a waitress he dubbed "Big Red" and partake of the oxtail soup, which invariably wound up decorating his whiskers.

Milligan usually hated any modern movie I dragged him to and harrumphed straight through it, but there were exceptions. We saw the sadistic Stephen King thriller *Misery* with James Caan and Kathy Bates more than once. He raved about the homosexual overtones in the *Lonesome Dove* made for-TV movie and watched Fassbinder videos I brought him with interest. It was really fun taking him to bad movies, though, like Norman Mailer's indescribable *Tough Guys Don't Dance*. "I feel as though I've been violated," he muttered afterward.

Most of the time Andy seemed in pain, but very sweet. With every visit came some philosophical nugget only he could come up with. "Comics are horrible people, babe - except for George Burns." Then, a propos of nothing, "Madonna is a *slut*, a *whore*." The man who made *Torture Dungeon* found the world of the MTV generation distinctly lacking. "Nothing's lovely any more. Even sunsets and sunrises aren't enjoyed. Everything is just taken for granted."

Andy was wasting away. He'd always wear this "American Dreamer" bomber jacket, complete with flags. As the weeks passed, the jacket started to overtake him. Every time I saw it I thought of a couplet from "American Dream," an otherwise forgettable Neil Young ditty: "Who knows where it all went wrong, maybe when you were young and strong."

At some point early on in this grim scenario, Andy decided he couldn't kill himself. He wanted me to do him in. Milligan was well aware I'd been around drugs a time or two in my life, so he looked to me to provide an overdose for his final exit. A one-way ticket to dreamland on the skag express. What a bitter irony: here was Andy, the lifelong crusader against drugs, rhapsodizing about his hot shot.

I told him I'd do it, but all my high times had taken place back East, and I was making a point of remaining unfamiliar with this particular side of the LA underbelly. So I contacted an ex-dopefiend Former Movie Star who was willing to lend a hand. Andy was elated. He gushed continually about this "angel of death" and how she was going to free him.

One day that summer I met Andy out in Santa Monica. Determined to cheer him up, I wore an absurd country-western shirt he'd stitched together for me. Milligan also gave me an old pair of Wayne's cowboy boots, which I wear to this day. He was uncharacteristically late, having missed his bus. "Oh babe, my mind is going."

We walked out on one of the piers and watched the waves as seagulls whined. Andy was bitterly reflective. "My dress shop was hell, my movies were hell, my theater was hell," he moaned. "I've lost the desire for

everything - eating, movies, people. The only time I feel good is lying down."

Andy confessed he'd had thousands of anonymous sexual encounters and was sure he'd killed Wayne. With Keeton's street trade background, there was no logic to this line of thought, but Andy obsessed over it constantly. Wayne was an innocent and Andy had killed him. Who knows what other self-tortures roiled through that Victorian mind.

The wind on the pier that day was too much for Andy. He started coughing and wheezing and we had to turn back. "Don't worry, I won't expire here," he joked. This would be one of our last excursions. "I wish to God I knew I'd meet my friends in the hereafter, but I know there's nothing, there's nothing."

Although trivial in comparison to Andy's situation, I was in a bit of a fix myself at this point. In order to work on the Really Big Celebrity biography, I had walked away from my film editing career and abandoned everything else. This crazy cat and mouse game would prove endless, and I was already dead broke. Andy thought it was all crazy, but began slipping me a few bills every time I saw him.

There I stood in Andy's homemade shirt and Wayne's boots. Who was hustling now? Very painfully, I expressed my embarrassment to Andy. "Just write a good obituary, babe," he said, handing me a wad of dough. It was some time later that I found out he had been living off Wayne's disability checks.

***

Summer turned to fall, and the interviews for this book finally ground to a halt. I just went over one day, and, after umpteen questions, he stared at the recorder and looked at me with those sad blue eyes and said, "No more questions. OK, babe?" We went to see a revival-house showing of his old Bette Davis favorite, *Now, Voyager*. We were the only customers there. Andy wept at the climax, then the print broke near the end of the movie and he cursed the screen. It was the last movie we'd attend.

No movies, no plays, no action. Andy was like a sleeping shark. On his way to the bottom.

***

Back in New York, people from Milligan's past were dying like flies from AIDS. Two of his absolute favorites from the Cino, Charles Loubier and Kenny Burgess, both checked out. Andy was obsessed with how they went, whether they suffered. "It's a plague, babe. A plague."

Andy was amused by my tales of the Really Big Celebrity, though he chastised me for putting all my eggs in one basket. "You're masochistic enough, babe!'

Milligan made a failed attempt to revive his acting career and got unexpected work as a catalog model in RV ads. The "family" he posed with had no idea the kindly grandpa standing next to them was the original blood-thirsty butcher.

To pass the time he tried to work on plays, particularly one called *Royalty*, in which homosexual lovers kill themselves together after one learns he has AIDS. Miranda told him the ending was too depressing. Andy never finished it.

He did picture puzzles and tended his roses, but mostly he did more and more nothing.

***

In late January, Wayne's money ran out. Andy told me he just stood there helpless, banging on the bank machine. Now a pauper, Andy was more dependent on John Miranda than ever, which made him even more resentful toward the one person helping him the most. "He's playing the great role of *my* life!" hissed Andy. "He's selfish, selfish!" How Miranda took it so calmly and gracefully I'll never figure out.

That February, John tried to get Andy into a self-help group for HIV positive people. He actually went once - hating every minute - but then expressed the desire to join a more "upbeat, positive group." "Andy, you've

been in a bad mood for forty years," quipped Miranda. "*Who* could cheer *you* up."

Earlier that month, Frank Echols had moved out of the second floor and returned to New York, leaving Andy alone in the cold, empty house. "Frank never talked to me. Now he's gone."

Andy looked frightful. He'd hobble out from the bedroom blowing into his shaking hands, trying in vain to warm them. His cheeks were sunken and his teeth were gone. He slept continually in the same clothes. His long, bony fingers grew black as a coal miner's. I came to dread visiting the house. Weekly bags of food donated from an AIDS charity were piled everywhere, untouched. On the dusty table sat a book on euthanasia, *Let Me Die Before I Wake*.

A little over a week into April 1991, Andy was admitted into the Olive Branch Medical Center in Sylmar. The day before, a doctor had examined Andy - who now weighed 100 pounds with his clothes on - and announced, "This man is dying." Milligan went into any hospital very much against his will. He wouldn't take AZT or DDI and refused any other treatments that might prolong his life.

Although weak and falling apart, Milligan was his usual toxic self when I visited him at Olive Branch. I came in one day to find the patient in the next bed whispering nervously to his visitors - Andy had already barked at them to keep their visits brief. He quarreled with the nurses and complained that their heels click-clacking on the hospital floor was keeping him awake at night. When a priest came in to offer help from God, Andy threw him out.

Andy desperately wanted out of the hospital. "I know what happens next," he whispered. "I saw what happened to Wayne." He dreamed of Kentucky Fried Chicken. One day I slipped out as visiting hours were ending to sneak him a box, racing back just under the wire. Andy took a bite and frowned. "I guess they didn't have any dark meat, babe."

At times he hallucinated, saw strange bugs scuttling across the floor. Other times he was painfully lucid. "I want to go home and see the Angel," he said, his big petrified eyes staring like an owl. "I don't think Jim wants to

make that call," said John Miranda. "Well, he'll *have* to," said Andy. He had told the entire staff about the plans for our little suicide skag party, much to my dismay.

***

By the first of May, Andy was back at home. Arms black and blue from endless IV drips, he was in awful shape, but his humor was somewhat intact. When I walked into the house on Scott Avenue, Andy was lying in bed in a diaper, shaking. "Do you know who this is?" Miranda asked him, gesturing to me. "Sure ... H-H-H-H-Harpo Marx," he quipped.

Milligan perked up like a little kid when he saw me - obviously the time had come for a big hug from the Angel of Death. The truth was, my connection was having trouble connecting and kept putting me off. I was getting more and more squeamish anyway.

Other people were making graceful exits; I could have found help. Instead I blocked it from my mind. I just couldn't do it, couldn't kill him. It was the biggest mistake of my life. I'll never forget the look of absolute horror on his face when he crawled out of that hospital only to discover he'd have to live a little longer on this miserable planet after all. Poor Andy. He suffered medieval tortures over the next few months.

I wish I could erase from my mind the sight of Andy trapped in that cluttered room, his teeth chattering as he huddled under a blood-and-shit stained electric blanket, surrounded by boxes of diapers, mountains of empty pill bottles, and greasy, discarded containers of Popeye's chicken. Not many biographers get to wipe the ass of their subject, but I did, more than a few times. "We should've done the shot months ago," he complained. Feeling guilty and more than a little exasperated one day, I angrily offered to hand him a razor from the other room. "I dunno, babe ... don't have the nerve. And such a mess."

Whatever Andy was, he had always been independent and proud of it. Now he was a prisoner, his dignity all but stripped away. I got more and more depressed until finally Miranda asked me not to come. That wasn't an option. The house now had a downstairs tenant, an alcoholic woman who

ended up in the hospital as well. "Dr. Caligula's House of Horrors," John took to calling the place.

The only thing that seemed to bring Andy relief during our visits was a cup of ice water from his beloved Brite Spot. I'd hold his head up - his gray hair all wet and slicked up like a baby eagle's - then pour a trickle into his parched lips. He'd light up like a Christmas tree. "Oh, babe, that's so good, so good. They must have special water at the Brite Spot. Special water. Best fuckin' ice water in town, babe."

***

A few months earlier Andy had given me his equipment - basically a few dusty Moviolas and his old 35mm Arriflex. I got hold of a truck and hauled it away. "I wish I could help more, babe," said Andy, wheezing on the porch. The gift came not a moment too soon - the very next day I pawned one of the Moviolas for funds to further my Big Celebrity research. I couldn't bring myself to tell Andy. I said I was keeping it "at a friend's house." I was certain he saw through it all. Andy was right: people are no damn good.

Now came entire visits where Andy just lay there in silence, his one good eye staring out into space. I found myself perusing my future inheritance the movies, the scripts - as Andy lay there suffering. Some pal I was - already shoveling dirt on his grave. The human element, babe.

One day while looking for towels I came upon a beat-up dresser. Inside one of the drawers was a gigantic butt plug, plus an equally enormous shit streaked dildo, both dotted with dried wax. Tossed atop it all was a porno mag, with a garish playing card stuck in the middle featuring the comically endowed X-rated "superstar" Dick Rambone. I was contemplating the physical logistics of these nefarious instruments when Andy's moans brought me back to earth. What was I looking for? Who was ghastly now?

***

The days and the visits ran together. Andy disintegrated more each time. I can barely look at my daily entries:

5/13/91

smell of death everywhere

"Anything I can get you, Andy?" "A new life."

"You look like you're solving a big riddle." "No babe, they were all solved a long time ago."

5/16/91

Andy holding dick, trying to piss into urinal

"Perfect timing, babe, perfect timing. So good to see you."

"Everybody has religion, everybody ... I wish I could believe. Life is so full of emptiness ..." voice trailed off in a halfhearted mumble, his lid began to drag, right eye staring at the ceiling

"Excuse me, Andy? Emptiness . .. ?"

"Oh babe, you know what I mean, you know *exactly* what I mean ... life is so empty."

5/17/91

Brite Spot water. Andy drinks. "Was it good?" I ask.

Andy uppity. "Yes! Was it good for *you*?"

In & out of consciousness

Trying to pee in glass of milk

5/18/91

first time Andy didn't know me

"I was calling and calling you ... too bad we didn't have all this miracle time ... so wonderful not to have any problems."

5/19/91

came in - blankets were all off him, he was shivering. "Roses," he murmured, grabbing his pecker. "Just roses."

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One Monday late in May, John came in to find Andy sprawled on the floor, his bony foot caught in the bed frame. The downstairs tenant had cranked up her radio to drown out his screams. It was appallingly clear that no matter how much he detested the hospital, Andy couldn't die at home.

Miranda called an ambulance. Two attendants showed up in rubber gloves and masks and dragged Andy away. I visited him at Hollywood Presbyterian on the 23rd and, pumped up on an army of drugs, he was more lucid than he'd been in weeks. He was also tied to the bed.

"Get me outta here, get me out, babe ... wanna go home," Andy begged. I snuck out of responding by fluffing his pillow. He was in ecstasy. I prayed for the strength to smash the pillow into his face and end his misery. It didn't come.

When I walked in on the 26th, Andy had the plastic urinal - three-quarters full of his own piss - raised to his lips. I quickly grabbed it away. It was a scene worthy of *Surgikill*. Andy was little more than skull and bones now. "They shaved his mustache," Miranda muttered to me, both of us realizing what a final indignation that was. They had missed one little cluster of white hair under his lip. One puff. That's all that seemed to be left of Andy.

I'd been visiting Andy every other day or so, but all of a sudden I just couldn't hack it. The call came in from Miranda at eighty-thirty the morning of June 3, 1991. Andy Milligan had died alone in room 921 of the Queen of Angels Hospital at approximately two A.M. Just as I was about to drive over to the hospital, a friend answering the phone called out the news. I slumped against the wheel of my broken-down Chevy Cavalier. Andy was gone.

A few days later, I was hocking his camera, a camera that should be in a museum someplace today, or in the hands of someone who loved movies as much as Andy. Here I was pawning it for quick cash, all so I could chase

down the Really Big Celebrity. "I don't think you'll get much for the ashes," quipped a friend.

But Andy never got to live his dream of being the unidentifiable tangy highlight in everybody's cheese dip. Nobody had the cash for the cremation or the wake. His remains were chucked in an anonymous mass grave with all the other indigent rejects from the hospital morgue.

On June 14, Miranda called. He was so upset he could barely spit the words out. Turns out Andy had changed his will in October, taking John's name off the papers for the house. Panicked, John called the escrow people. "Looks like your friend screwed you," they said. Miranda was stunned by Andy's cruelty. "I could lose it all," he moaned. "Why would Andy do this? All the repairs, mortgage payments, light bills, phone bills ... why would he betray me like this? I don't understand."

It sounds terrible, but I had to laugh. Aaaaaaaah, it was so fucking funny. And right out of *Seeds*. Andy - reaching from beyond the grave to torture the living one last time.

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By the time of Andy's death, Andy Milligan's Times Square was limping toward the graveyard as well. In 1990, thirty-four properties - including eight theaters - that the state had basically stolen from private owners with a ruse called eminent domain were now officially condemned, finally opening the doors for a "new" 42nd Street. Nine months later, the block's oldest theatre - the Victory - was replacing its porno triple bill with a live production of *Romeo and Juliet*. "Era Ends as Times Square Drops Slashers for Shakespeare," noted the *New York Times*. Reporter John Tierney proclaimed it "the first visible triumph in the $2.5 billion project to redevelop." Endless legal battles, money woes, and in-fighting caused redevelopment to temporarily lose momentum, and for a while most of the theaters were shuttered, leaving the block like a ghost town. For a couple of summers the only signs of life were dreary, hipster art pieces commissioned by redevelopers in an apparent attempt to bring a bit of Soho to the Deuce. "The theater marquees that once boasted the best porn in town now featured

Jenny Holzer's 'Truism' and 'Survival' messages, such as 'MEN DON'T PROTECT YOU ANYMORE,'" reported redevelopment historian Alexander Reichl.

But then Disney entered the fray. In 1993, the Walt Disney Company began negotiations to take over the New Amsterdam Theater for its live stage productions of such hit movies as *Beauty and the Beast*. Disney's involvement galvanized the forever-threatened "renovation" of Times Square.

"With its sparkling image of wholesale Americana, Disney's presence alone would symbolize the conquest of Forty-second Street by the forces of good over evil," wrote Reichl. The reality was that within a few years the Deuce was turned into a glorified mall, a tacky theme park designed to sucker money out of an upscale tourist clientele. By 1997, the restored Amsterdam opened to host the premiere of Disney's *Hercules*, which was followed by the very surreal sight of a Disney parade down the Deuce.

Many bemoaned the loss of the grindhouses, including me, but their number had long been up. And if one looked beyond the paper-thin "do gooder" veneer redevelopers were peddling, one could grimly appreciate that it was all in the huckster spirit of 42nd Street. The Deuce was all about greed, and one con had replaced another on the Street of Dreams. Out with Bingo Brandt, in with Mickey Mouse.

Rebecca Robertson, Gretchen Dykstra, and Cora Cohan were three of the powerful behind-the-scenes players in the various organizations bull dozing Times Square's lurid past, and the irony of their gender wasn't lost on Reichl: "It is perhaps fitting that women should administer the redevelopment of a street once known for its exploitation of women." Dames take over the Deuce! Too bad Andy Milligan wasn't around to blow his top.

***

Not too long after Andy's death, I stopped by a garage sale John Miranda and Frank Echols were having at 1920 Scott Avenue to get rid of some of the mountains of junk he had left behind. On a table sat a little trinket

Wayne Keeton had given John and Frank - "Something to remember me by." An absurd wooden owl, all green with big eyes and a puffy, proud chest, it sorta looked like Wayne. I paid two bucks for it.

We sat in the shade and talked about Andy. I got the idea that Miranda felt Milligan had brought a lot of his misery upon himself by coming from such a place of hate. I didn't know about that, but John told me a story that comes to mind frequently when I think of Andy.

Milligan had a small, deformed pinky on one hand. One day John inquired about it. Andy told him he'd emerged from the womb with his hands already in fists, and they had to surgically pry apart his fingers, damaging that one. "Andy was born angry," said John.

PART V

ST. PAUL

2000

13

TAUGHT BY MASTERS

There are a lot of things you don't know about your family.

- MORTIMER, IN MILLIGAN'S *SEEDS*

IF ANDY WAS INDEED "BORN ANGRY," it made me eternally curious about the womb he burst out of - and its owner, Marie Gladys Milligan. In words and film, Andy painted quite a picture of Mommy. Obese! Sadistic! Manipulative! I wanted to get to know her a little better. This desire didn't exactly thrill her son.

Although Andy encouraged me to contact almost everybody from his past, his childhood in St. Paul, Minnesota, was a closed door. When I started probing via phone interviews a few years before Milligan's death, he became agitated and uncooperative. Whatever lurked there he didn't want me to know. I left it alone.

In September 2000, long after Andy's demise, I finally went to St. Paul.

The night before the trip, Wayne's brown cowboy boots - boots that Milligan had given me nearly a decade earlier and that I had worn frequently since - suddenly fell apart when a heel broke off, nearly toppling me face-down on the pavement. I took it as a malevolent message from Andy: "Don't go, babe."

I checked into a cheap, run-down motel located on the edge of St. Paul. Crawling with drug dealers and hookers, this flophouse would provide just the right ambiance for the horrors I was about to catalog.

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I felt some apprehension going to interview Andy's sister, Louise. She hadn't seen or talked to her brother since a violent altercation around 1969. "From then on I considered him *dead*," Louise said when I first talked to her by telephone in the late eighties.

With that intro I didn't expect a lot of sympathy as Andy Milligan's biographer, but Louise was warm and utterly disarming in the flesh. She possessed the piercing Milligan eyes and the mischievous mouth. It was apparent that Louise had had her own crosses to bear - she'd lost a son to drugs - and no doubt she could be one tough cookie when crossed. Her beloved husband, Herb, had passed away five years before, and the condo in which she now resided was enlivened by a friendly pooch and a plethora of craft projects, including intricately painted miniature dollhouses. Too bad Andy never saw this, I thought.

We started discussing the strange history of the Milligan clan. "Boy, what a family," I mused.

She shot me a look. "Not *that* bad! Most families have skeletons in their closet. Some are very forthright, some aren't."

I would be surprised at just how painfully candid the remaining Milligan family members could be.

***

Andrew Jackson Milligan Senior had been born in 1895. He grew up in such poverty that in his teens his father gave him a suitcase, announcing he could no longer afford to keep him at home. He rode the rails for a while, then settled into a long career in the military, teaching ROTC, and eventually retiring as a captain.

Somewhere along the way he encountered Marie Gladys Hull. Little is known about her side of the family, although Louise recalled an aunt confiding in her that at some point Marie's mother stopped speaking to her daughter because she felt that Marie had trapped Andrew Senior into marriage by feigning pregnancy. The couple was married, appropriately enough, on the Halloween of 1926.

Andrew Senior adopted Harley Hull, Marie's child from a previous marriage. Born in 1924, Harley was the eldest child. Andy Junior arrived in 1928, Louise a few years later.

Andrew Senior was a voracious reader, avid hunter, and a lifelong Republican known to be a soft touch for conservative causes. A couple of his grandchildren found him "creepy" - he'd grab them, inflicting stinging Indian burns on their arms until they managed to wriggle free. As a father, "he wasn't there," said Louise. "Dad was kind of old school. The provider. I can only remember him swimming with us maybe once or twice as a kid." Although Louise was more diplomatic than her siblings, no one in St. Paul grew sentimental remembering Marie. Plagued by health problems due to her weight, she was an insanely jealous person. Husband and wife often clashed, usually over his alleged infidelities. As Marie ran amok, Andrew Senior withdrew. "They battled a lot - we weren't protected from it, either," said Louise, who recalled Marie chasing Andrew Senior around the dining room table with a knife as she and Andy Junior cowered in a nearby bedroom. "I was scared as hell - and I know Andy was, too."

One day Louise and Andy Junior came home from grade school to find Marie sprawled across the bed unconscious, an empty bottle of pain pills nearby. "I could not wake her up," recalled Louise. "I think she had tried to OD that night, I really do. It took hours before she woke up."

What was the source of Marie's misery? According to Louise, "I think she got her way too much. I think in a way she wanted my dad to say, 'Hey, that's enough, Marie.'" But Andrew Senior was "passive," sighed Louise. "Peace at all costs."

Andy, of course, painted Marie Gladys as a crazed, manipulative bully who disapproved of his interest in the arts. Louise remembered it differently. "My mother encouraged it, my father frowned on it. I remember my dad making comments - 'He shouldn't be playing like that with Louise, he shouldn't be dressing up the dolls.' He thought Andy was strange."

Andy and Louise were quite the team as kids. "Andy was into art, painting, drawing, dressmaking - he'd make dresses for my dolls, stuff like that. Puppet shows in the basement. He was good that way." They'd traipse off to the movies together, keeping a scrapbook with all their ticket stubs. But as Andy's twisted and temperamental nature began to surface, they drifted apart. "Harley was much more of a brother to me than Andy."

Andy, a lone wolf who had no friends, eventually joined the Navy. "It seemed like every time there was a letter, there was somethin' wrong," said Louise. "Finally he got out and it was listed as a Section 8. It couldn't have pleased Dad." Andy had point-blank denied that his discharge had been classified Section 8.

Louise recalled Andy home on leave from the Navy, coming in late from a night on the town in Minneapolis, gushing blood. "His face and his nose were cut really, really bad." Harley drove him to the hospital. Andy didn't reveal what triggered the assault. "He wouldn't tell. ... He was quite quiet. He just kind of let us take care of him. He was just covered in blood. I remember washing that shirt out and washing it and washing it. I never found out what happened." Andy bore the scars on his face the rest of his life. He never discussed their origin.

Andy embarked on his career in the arts - and began to withdraw further from the family. "We didn't hear from him. The only time is when he wanted some money. My mom was always sending money; my dad didn't want her to. She was a soft touch for him - always scrounging, always helping him. My own opinion was she helped too much and he resented her for that.

"After my mom died, then my father took over enabling him. Andy called for money, he'd send him money. About two years before dad died, I asked him, 'Have you ever heard from Andy?' And he said, 'No, I never hear from him unless he needs something.' "

Louise lost track of her brother until Marie's funeral in 1953, when Andy very audibly criticized his mother in front of her bereaving family and friends, while standing mere feet from her casket. Louise and Harley were appalled. "You don't do that with a dog," said Louise. "No matter what his thoughts were, he should've kept them to himself. It was vicious."

The final contact between Louise and Andy came when he visited St. Paul around 1969. Louise was excited. "He had never seen my children. I had the kids dressed up real cute, priming them - 'You're gonna meet your uncle for the first time.' When I tried to introduce him to my children, he says, 'I don't

care if I meet 'em or not, I'll never see 'em.' My daughter was about four or five months old, and I said, 'What do you think of your niece?' And he said, 'Well, she looks awful fat to me.' And just kept walking by." Louise had saved a picture Andy had painted as a kid. "I had guarded that for a long time, thinking, 'He'll get a kick out of that.' But he wasn't a bit interested. He said, 'I don't care about that!' He was quite bitter, cynical."

By this time Andrew Senior was remarried to a Japanese woman named Taka. Along with her daughter, Kyoko, they lived at 1731 Wordsworth, the house where Andrew Senior had lived with Marie. Herb, Louise, and their children had moved in while Andrew Senior was overseas, which led to conflicts, particularly between Taka and Louise. Andy told his sister to butt out, telling Louise that she was "interfering with Taka and my dad - their marriage. He called me a cunt. And I slapped his face.

"He went after me. He threw me against the mirror in the dining room. Andy had me by the throat." Badly shaken, Louise managed to escape, calling her husband, who immediately confronted Andy.

A bar owner, hunter, and blustery man's man, Herb Howe was characteristically blunt about Milligan when I spoke to him some years before his death. "Andy had grabbed my wife and slapped her around and tried to choke her. One word led to another. He said, 'That's the way we treat our women in New York. Slap 'em around.'

"I hauled off and gave him a good open hand - to me, that's the most insulting thing, to have somebody slap with an open hand. And I knocked him down in the kitchen. I was really gonna work him over, but I thought, 'What the hell, this is just like beatin' a girl.'

"I never had much to do with him outside of kickin' the shit out of him, y'know. I just tol' him, 'Don't ever let me see you around my place *any* time.' I called him a goddamn queer." Herb pummelled Andy into a bloody pulp, sending him into the hospital with a cracked rib. Milligan had made *Seeds* only a year before, and the nightmare in St. Paul must have made him feel like he was trapped inside one of his own movies.

Milligan never returned to St. Paul. Andrew Senior died in 1985 and, according to Taka, desperately wanted to see Andy Junior in the last years of his life. Nobody knew where to find him.

Despite her anger, Andy's estrangement seemed to fill Louise with regret. She was fascinated to hear about his life, and wanted to have a picture of her brother.

"I'm sorry all that happened. I'm sincerely sorry ... I couldn't understand it. I still don't. I loved him. I mean, he was my blood brother."

As Louise and I discussed the many mysteries of Andy Milligan, a gravel-voiced Ray Charles singing 'You Don't Know Me' wafted out of the easy listening station playing in the background. It echoed around the room, and I felt Andy's spirit nearby. It chilled my blood.

Louise grew melancholy trying to unravel what she saw as the sorrow of her brother's life. "What happened? What goes on?" She sighed. "The older I get, the less I understand.

"I don't know where he went wrong, what went wrong. A very dominating mother - that had to have something to do with it."

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Kyoko Katayama - Andy's stepsister - was my detective in St. Paul. A therapist who was putting her own memoirs on paper in an attempt to make peace with the past, she understood the importance of solving mysteries. Kyoko had met Andy only briefly during his battle with Louise in 1969. Her mother, Taka, had tried to break up the fight, and had also attended Andy's wedding to Candy in 1968. Taka had warm feelings toward him, which obviously hadn't been the case with some of Andrew Senior's family. Andy felt Taka had offered his father a happiness he'd never known with Marie.

In the early sixties, Andrew Senior lived in Japan, where he'd spent a few years during the postwar occupation. He married Taka around 1962, adopted Taka's then-teenage daughter, Kyoko, and the trio left for the States in 1964. The product of an earlier union between Taka and an American serviceman, Kyoko was regarded as a "half-breed," rejected and devalued

by her culture. The situation worsened upon arrival in the States. Speaking next to no English, her outsider status only intensified, and she now had to accept Andrew Senior - a strange, inscrutable foreigner much older than Taka - as her father. He was ill equipped to deal with her needs. It was a surreal, sad affair.

After visiting St. Paul, Andrew Senior decided to head south with his new family. "He wanted to live in Laredo, Texas. He wanted to spend his time hunting wild boars," recalled Kyoko. "As we got deeper and deeper down in Texas, Mom and I started to notice things just don't look the same around here. And Dad, like a good military man, decided to get a haircut. It was very hot, mid-August.

"He said, 'While I get a haircut you and Mom go get something to drink.' In this little bar. This dark place. They were playing the funniest music. They were talking funny languages." Kyoko and her mother had never seen Mexicans before. "We walked in and they all glared at us. It was a terrifying experience. I started to cry. We were used to having all this cultural access, and here we are in the middle of nowhere."

After a disastrous move to Corpus Christi, Andrew Senior moved them back to St. Paul, where Taka and Kyoko initially shared a house with Herb, Louise, and their five kids. Kyoko's name was anglicized to "Kay" because her Japanese name was deemed "too difficult to pronounce." She remembered arriving at the crowded, cluttered St. Paul home and, clutching a ukulele her Japanese boyfriend had given her, yearning for her homeland. Kyoko might as well have been dropped on Mars. It would take years before she felt she had any kind of identity of her own.

Kyoko would find that one of the scarier aspects of life in the Milligan family was anything to do with sex. In keeping with the times, the subject was greeted with ignorance and silence. Decades later, Taka would stun her daughter by calmly revealing that Andrew Senior had informed her before their marriage that he was impotent. Apparently the one and only time Taka had ever had sex in her life was the liaison with the serviceman that had produced Kyoko.

***

I spoke to Andy's stepbrother, Harley LeRoy Hull, only once via telephone in the late eighties, but it was startling nonetheless. Hull was amazed by my interest in Andy Milligan and his movies, musing that no book on his life would sell. A book on *his* life, though, might be a blockbuster.

"Why?" I asked Harley.

"Well, it might have something to do with the way I've lived my life and the things I've done with it ... I became a pedophile. I've often thought the title would be an interesting one - *The Wayward Pedophile*. What he has done, how he went through his life in this age and not got hung or something."

Stunned by Hull's candor, I listened in silence as he blandly continued. "My preference is *boys*, and that has been my downfall. I can't become a full fledged homosexual. Because when a man goes past fifteen, he just turns me off. I would say in the area of sex I'm a genuine fuckup, a genuine fuckup. Christ, I have been to psychiatrists for years and years - it's a bunch of BS. Once you're a pedophile, you're a pedophile. There is no cure."

Harley was the product of Marie Gladys's failed first marriage to one Carl L. Stutsman, a bigamist who at one time was dragged into court over unpaid child support involving three different women. Andrew Milligan Senior later adopted Harley, but they were never close. Some relatives theorize that Harley's Jewish heritage didn't sit well with his conservative stepfather. Whatever the case, Marie was overprotective of her firstborn, who was somewhat sickly at birth. Harley would eventually require a glass eye and an operation to remove an undescended testicle.

Harley maintained that he and Andy had not been close as children. "Andrew was inclined to be, oh, I don't know how you put it, feminine. I was not at all sissified – I like to play ball and rough-and-tumble with the kids and I enjoyed hunting, football, and fishing. In fact, if you ever met me, you'd never suspect I was a damn pedophile."

By all accounts Harley was an engaging fellow who had a career in the service, then became a successful and well-liked businessman, owning a

Pfaff Sewing Machine shop in Aberdeen, South Dakota. But his desires soon overwhelmed him. "I bought this hotel up on Main Street - in the lobby there was pinball machines. The kids would come in and start playin' pinball ... One thing would lead to another and pretty soon I had my kids. I had quite a string of boys out there in South Dakota. I had, oh, about ten of 'em overall.

"Sometimes I had the same kid for four or five years. I tried to attach relationships with the kids I came in contact with. I think that's why I was able to stay out of trouble most of the time. I always tried to take advantage of the situation when it fell my way, that's all.

"I started drinking - that was my downfall. I got careless and started foolin' around with some kid I didn't know, and he blew the whistle on me. In a small town like Aberdeen, I suppose it was the scandal of the year."

Harley lost his business and spent some time institutionalized. He went to Europe, roamed around the country. At some point he landed in Ohio and back in trouble with the law. "I got acquainted with three different boys that used to come to my apartment. I was having sex with them." The trio routinely played hooky at Harley's place until one day, sick with a cold and paranoid he'd get caught, he told them they couldn't come in. "Well, one of the young kids went home pissed off and said somethin' to his momma and there it went."

Hull was released from prison in 1988 and made his way back to St. Paul. Louise had stood by Harley and tried to help him throughout the years, but his offenses were occurring with alarming frequency.

Louise lost contact with her brother until the mid-nineties, when a prison minister who'd tried to help Harley contacted her, telling her that her brother was very ill and near death in a small Texas border town. He also revealed that Harley was leaving his $30,000 estate to a fifteen-year-old Mexican boy whose family couldn't wait to get their hands on the dough. The minister was repulsed by Hull's final wishes, but was legally bound to carry them out.

In our one conversation years earlier, I'd asked Harley who had abused him. He claimed that no one had. "Lotta times they seem to say if you sex abuse a kid then he'll turn out wrong. Well I was never sex-abused and I turned wrong anyway. I was, I suppose, *emotionally* abused - no love from my father, and smother-love from my mother. *Smother-love*."

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The sexual abuse that marked the Milligan family didn't end with Harley. According to one victim, Andrew Senior also fondled a number of female relatives, some of them prepubescent. Having spoken to one of the survivors, I have no doubt the accusations are true.

"He liked to tickle me. I mean, I'm fifteen ... I would try to get away. And we would get into this wrestling. And in the process he was always fondling my breasts. In the beginning he was really sneaky - like it was an accident - and then it just sort of became a pattern. I hated it." When she learned years later that Andrew Senior had been molesting her own children, she angrily confronted him. Staring at the ground, he acknowledged his wrongdoing. She never left her kids alone with him again.

***

On my next-to-last day in St. Paul, as an interview with one relative was winding down, we talked about Andy Junior. "I think he was very unhappy with himself." She paused, then blurted out, "Andy molested me when we were little." He was around eleven, she was a few years younger. "It was a little place where we played under steps. It just happened twice ... I wouldn't go anywhere with him after that - any place secluded." Some sixty years later, the pain was still visible on her face.

For a moment the clock stopped. What can you say when someone spills their guts, spits out a secret they've carried all their life? Nothing, absolutely nothing. She immediately regretted telling me. Who wouldn't?

Stumbling through the rest of the interview, I hit the highway in a trance. As hookers tromped the hallways, doors slammed and generic rap blasted from shitty boomboxes, I parked my ass in silence on the cheap, garish bedspread

in my shabby motel room. "I thought I'd heard it all about Andy, but maybe I hadn't been listening. Why it should surprise me I don't know. You could've smelled it coming a mile away.

I took a certain pride in getting people to spill the beans, but at the moment this "talent" only filled me with dread. I was no therapist, no expert. I was just mucking around in the past for some tawdry book. These people had been children, and abuse had wreaked havoc in all their lives.

The incestuous underpinnings in Andy's films now seemed more unsavory than ever. *Seeds* in particular has many painful details that correspond directly to Milligan's past. His childhood had tormented him - and kept the black heart of his movies pumping. He had dealt with it all by turning his back on his family, eviscerating them in film after film. Purging them from his system, over and over again. Did he ever really escape?

Biography is a cheat, something of a fiction. An approximation - air pudding, really. The parts of the story that are left out are maddening - and there are always parts left out. Some participants refuse to talk, some are dead, others lie to you. People distort their role in events, others hold back because they don't like the way you ask the question. Occasionally somebody tells you the truth, whatever that is. But often the real story just gets lost in the tears of time.

So many mysteries remain about Andy Milligan. Section 8 and his experiences in the Navy. The disfiguring scar on his face. The S&M murder in England he so gleefully described. What were the things Milligan promised to tell me on his deathbed? And who had molested Andy? He had told me about a military man placing Andy's hand on his crotch during a movie. Was that the beginning of it all? Had Harley victimized Andy? Both had said no. And what about Mommy and Daddy?

"It's like two bad seeds," said Kyoko of Andrew Senior and Marie. "Marie with her problems and Andy with his ignorances. Bad combination ... I think the kids were just lost."

As a therapist, Kyoko has worked with a number of incest survivors and done endless research on the subject. She had the feeling that Marie may

have been an abuser as well. "I've studied and worked with many incest families and individual victims," said Kyoko. "My hunch is that she was crooked sexually and used her boys in that way."

Once again I plunged back into Andy's scripts and screenplays to study Milligan's maternal monsters one last time. There was no denying it: mother / child incest was alluded to in more than a few places, alongside a longing for Mommy that was blatantly sexual. This was a barrel of crabs that had no bottom.

Andy Milligan screamed his soul out in his dime-store creations. It was the wail of a banshee, of a werewolf, of a shrieking skeleton mocking the black night. A voice too painful for the world to hear.

My Mamas not dead ... my Mamas with me all the time ... my Mama and I would sleep together ... when it was real cold we'd hug each other tight ... and Mama would kiss me ... right on the mouth ... Mama would do all the shopping and she would come home, I'd take off her shoes and rub her feet ... sometimes her feet were all swelled up and I would kiss them and she would say 'Oh that feels nice ... ohhh ... ' Mama was very fat ... I used to give Mama her bath ... I would scrub Mama all over ... she would say Here Jo here you forgot a place ... I got all tingly when I gave her a bath ... Then it would be my time ... and she would scrub me all over ... I miss Mama I miss Mama ...

- JO, IN MILLIGAN'S *THE BITCH*

EPILOGUE

DEAR ANDY

Each man kills the thing he loves.

- OSCAR WILDE, *THE BALLAD OF READING GAOL*

Dear Andy,

It's been almost ten years since you kicked the bucket, so I thought I'd drop you a line. Sorry about that whole death thing, I really blew it. You needed a bloodthirsty butcher, all you got was a sissy scribe. We biographers are such cowards, cluck, cluck.

I finally went to St. Paul, Andy. I learned a few things I wish I hadn't. By the way, I've come to one conclusion. You were right - I'm a Flesh-Peddling WHORE! AHAHAHAHA! That one's for you. You'll hate this fucking book. I await my beating in the afterlife.

You were on the money about the Really Big Celebrity. He took me for a ride. People are No Damn Good, so I took your advice and retreated from the world, just like you, Brando, and Raymond Burr. These days I live way out on a farm, a million miles from everything. Those *Monstrosity* days are about as hazy as a faded Polaroid, but when the clock strikes twelve, the moon is high, and reruns of your cherished *Golden Girls* no doubt flicker in some foreign land, I think of you.

Movies are more crass than ever, full of sex, violence, and even occasionally your favorite - incest. *Seeds* could be a TV sitcom. Hollywood has no shame. Now they do all the things you were villified for - and they win Oscars for it. Hardcore sex is everywhere: cable, the Internet, and pay channels that are available in any major hotel. It's gone corporate, Andy. AT&T, Time Warner, and General Motors are just a few of today's smut peddlers.

You wouldn't recognize the Deuce these days. The only place you can catch a flick is at a zillionplex-with-food-court, and it's the same big-budget crap

that the rest of the country gets force-fed. I don't think Forty Two Street will be hosting a Milligan fest anytime soon.

I figured a return visit would wrap up the book, but I just couldn't stomach it. So I got Matt Baylor to telephone his report. Remember crazy old Matty? He's still hanging in there, still up and at 'em at two A.M.

He's unimpressed with the New Times Square. He sez, "Hey, I'm sorry, but it needs the sleaze." Everything's so different these days, Andy. Not that Matt's crying over the past. You know what he told me? "Like the Roaring Twenties, it's over. The wild times are gone."

Queen Victoria

P.S. Where are you, anyway? Heaven, hell, or the cheese dip? Is Wayne there? Look out for Mom!

I miss you

"HATRED AND DECEIT"

EXCERPTS FROM THE SCRIPTS OF ANDY MILLIGAN

FLESHPOT ON 42ND STREET, 1972

[Dusty, a thieving but somewhat kind prostitute, is moving in with her old friend Cherry, a drag queen hooker.]

(THE DOOR OPENS AND THEY ENTER ... DUSTY HAS WITH HER THE TWO BAGS THAT HER BELONGINGS WERE PUT IN ... IN THE FIRST SCENE ...)

CHERRY: The place needs a good cleaning ... here give me those.... (SHE REACHES FOR DUSTY'S BAGS AND PUTS THEM ON THE FLOOR BY A COUCH.)

DUSTY: Where's the john?

CHERRY: In there ... if you can get in the door ... just pull those stockings out of your way that are hanging there ...

(DUSTY EXITS INTO THE JOHN AND CHERRY GOES FOR A BOTTLE OF WINE SHE HAS IN THE KITCHEN ... SHE TAKES OFF THE TOP AND TAKES A SWIG AND THEN LOOKS TO SEE THAT DUSTY IS IN THE JOHN STILL AND TAKES ANOTHER SWIG ... SHE PUTS THE BOTTLE BACK WHERE SHE HAD IT AND WAVES HER HAND IN FRONT OF HER MOUTH TO GET RID OF THE SMELL OF ALCOHOL ... A MOMENT OF CHERRY FIXING HER HAIR AND DUSTY ENTERS)

DUSTY: Whewww ... Do I feel better ... What are the house rules?

CHERRY: You have to try to stay out at least 'til twelve during the week and I'd like it if possible to be able to bring tricks back here 'til around two ... that alright with you?

DUSTY: Sure honey ... say, I got an idea ... why don't we sort of join forces ... We could both turn quite a few each night if we play our cards right ...

CHERRY: Fabulous ... You know I gotta a lot of numbers that want girls ... instead of me, I mean ... maybe I could introduce them to you ... I bet you get much more than I do ...

DUSTY: You want to clean house tomorrow?

CHERRY: Sure ... It'll be much easier to keep this place clean with the two of us here ... Maybe I'll come home once in a while ... we could have some of the kids in for dinner, maybe ...

DUSTY: I don't know about that ... you know how most of them are ... one of them gets thrown out for not paying the rent and the first thing you know they are banging on the door ... I don't think it's such a good idea to have anyone here ...

CHERRY: Yeah ... you're right ... And friends are a great deal of work ... (THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR) Now who the fuck is that? (SHE GOES TO THE DOOR AND OPENS IT ... AND AN ATTRACTIVE MAN IS STANDING THERE - JIMMIE) ... Jimmie ... What are you doing here?

JIMMIE: I got a hard-on ... you were supposed to take care of me ...

CHERRY: We were supposed to meet tomorrow night ... did you forget?

JIMMIE: I got a hard-on ... what do you want me to do ... slam a window on it?

CHERRY: Well, I got a guest right now ... I can't really talk ... you know what I mean?

JIMMIE: Does he suck?

CHERRY: It ain't a he ... it's a she ... like me ... see? (SHE OPENS THE DOOR A LITTLE WIDER AND DUSTY NODS AT THE INTRUDER ... HE EYES HER UP AND DOWN AND COMES IN THE ROOM)

JIMMIE: You been holding out on me ... you didn't tell me about her ... you didn't tell me anything at all about her ... my name's Jimmie ... (HE PUTS OUT HIS HAND ... SHE IGNORES IT)

DUSTY: Yeah ... I gather as much ...

CHERRY: She ain't too friendly ... is she?

DUSTY: I am - with gentlemen ...

JIMMIE: What's that supposed to mean?

DUSTY: Take it for what it's worth ...

JIMMIE: Hey ... I like her ...

CHERRY: She's my competition ...

JIMMIE: It ain't the same thing ...

CHERRY: Says who?

DUSTY: (GETS UP) Why don't I go, hon ... I can come back in an hour.

JIMMIE: Why don't she go (INDICATES CHERRY) and you stay ...

DUSTY: Let Cherry call the shots ...

JIMMIE: I pay well ...

CHERRY: That he does ...

DUSTY: It's up to Cherry ...

CHERRY: Look ... Dusty and I will have a conference ... Okay ... We'll be right back ... come on, hon ...

(THEY EXIT INTO HALLWAY ... CUT TO: HALLWAY)

CHERRY: You want him?

DUSTY: He's not bad looking ...

CHERRY: Yeah, he's that way all over ...

DUSTY: Does he pay well?

CHERRY: I get about twenty ...

DUSTY: You can get more than that ...

CHERRY: Honey, if I had what you got, I'd be a millionaire by now ...

DUSTY: You want me to turn him ... I could roll him for all he's got.

CHERRY: Don't you dare ... It took me years to build my tricks up to coming to my door instead of me going to them ... Just get what you can and tell him this is the last time you'll be able to fix him up ... I don't want to lose him to you ...

DUSTY: Is he married?

CHERRY: Yeah ...

DUSTY: Good ...

CHERRY: Why?

DUSTY: They're just a lot safer than the single ones ... with single ones you never know what they'll spring on ya ...

CHERRY: You better go in before he loses interest ...

DUSTY: See you in about an hour?

CHERRY: O.K. (SHE REMEMBERS SOMETHING AND TURNS BACK TO DUSTY) He is a little weird ...

DUSTY: Like how?

CHERRY: Well, knowing that you used to like to shack up with Hal ... there's nothing that you can't handle ... Bye ... (SHE IS OFF)

(DUSTY TURNS AND ENTERS THE APARTMENT ... WE CUT TO THE APARTMENT AND JIMMIE IS STANDING THERE STARK NAKED WITH A HARD ON ... SHE QUICKLY CLOSES THE DOOR AND STARES AT HIM ...)

JIMMIE: Come here ... I said come here . . . (HE GRABS HER BY THE HAND AND TRIES TO FORCE HER TO HER KNEES ... SHE RESISTS)

DUSTY: *I* say when ... and it's not now ... (SHE WALKS AWAY FROM HIM)

JIMMIE: (CONFUSED) I don't understand ... Cherry likes it that way ...

DUSTY: I'm not Cherry ...

JIMMIE: Well, what do you want?

DUSTY: I want it on the bed ... like two civilized animals ...

(SHE POINTS, THEY GO TO THE BED AND HE LIES DOWN ON IT ... SHE STARTS TO UNDRESS ... SORT OF TEASING HIM AS SHE DOES ... HE IS PLAYING WITH HIMSELF ... SHE IS NOW NAKED AND STANDS NEAR HIM ... HE IS LOOKING UP AT HER ... HE STANDS UP AND THEY START TO WARM UP ... HE PUSHES HER ON THE BED AND MOUNTS HER ... HE STARTS TO GET SADISTIC WITH HER AND SHE STRUGGLES TO FREE HERSELF ... HE IS TOO STRONG FOR HER AND SHE GOES LIMP AND TURNS HER FACE FROM HIM ... THEY LIE THERE FOR A MOMENT AND HE GETS UP ...)

JIMMIE: You bitch ... you no good bitch ... (HE GRABS HIS PANTS AND TAKES HIS BELT AND STANDS OVER HER ... SHE STARTS TO GET UP AND HE THREATENS HER) Don't move ... (SHE STAYS WHERE SHE IS) Turn over ... I said turn over ...

(SHE DOES. HE RAISES HIS BELT AND STARTS TO STRAP HER WITH IT ... HAND CAMERA SHOTS LOOKING UP AT HIM AS HE IS GETTING HIS ROCKS OFF AS WE FADE ...)

(FADE IN: IT IS LATER ... THEY ARE NOW DRESSED ... HE HAS ON HIS PANTS AND IS PUTTING ON HIS SHOES ...)

JIMMIE: Ya alright?

DUSTY: Sure ... why?

JIMMIE: I sort of got carried away there ...

DUSTY: I know how to handle myself ... (PAUSE) You're married, huh?

JIMMIE: Yeah ...

DUSTY: She go for this scene? (SHE IS COMBING HER HAIR)

JIMMIE: Naw ... I'm lucky if I get a piece of ass from her ...

DUSTY: How long you been married?

JIMMIE: Three years ... why?

DUSTY: Just wondering ... what religion is she?

JIMMIE: Irish Catholic ...

DUSTY: It figures ...

JIMMIE: What do you mean? (HE HAS ON HIS SHIRT BY THIS TIME AND IS NOW PUTTING ON HIS TIE)

DUSTY: I ain't met a person yet that was Catholic that wasn't fucked up.

JIMMIE: That's a rather broad statement ...

DUSTY: Well, look at you ...

JIMMIE: Look at what?

DUSTY: You like sex in sort of a mixed up way ... you get your kicks that way ... does she like it that way?

JIMMIE: No ... of course not ...

DUSTY: Doesn't she give you anything?

JIMMIE: Oh ... once in a while ...

DUSTY: I don't understand you American men ... you let your wives run all over you ... then you complain that it's her fault because she ain't interested in sex ... when you want it ... you got to train her in the habit of giving ... it's

very easy to go through life saying no all the time ... when half the time she means yes ... You guys have to stand up for your rights more often ... it's stupid to even talk about it ... it won't do any good ...

JIMMIE: You been married?

DUSTY: Once ...

JIMMIE: How long were you married?

DUSTY: Four months ...

JIMMIE: Four months ... that's not very long ... what happened?

DUSTY: For one thing ... I was too young ... I was sixteen ...

JIMMIE: How come you got married so young?

DUSTY: Stupid, I guess ... My mother let me do it ...

JIMMIE: Some mother ...

DUSTY: Yeah ... I was very selfish and I had to have my way.... My mother let me do whatever I wanted ... so she let me marry the guy ...

JIMMIE: How old was the guy?

DUSTY: Eighteen ...

JIMMIE: That was stupid ...

DUSTY: When people are young ... they are very selfish ... they can only think of one thing ... themselves ... they ain't ready for anything like sharing ... all they think about is me ... me ... me ...

JIMMIE: A lot of people get married when they are young ...

DUSTY: Yeah ... and they spend the rest of their lives hating their kids, their husbands and just about everything ... then if they have a weak husband that never says no to them they end up in an institution after menopause ... I'm telling ya ... I don't know your wife at all ... but if you don't start training her

right ... you're going to end up with a real sick handful when she gets older ...

JIMMIE: You don't know anything about me or my wife ... how can you say something like that?

DUSTY: Just remember what I told you ...

JIMMIE: I don't want to talk about it anymore ... you want to make a hundred bucks Friday?

DUSTY: Doing what?

JIMMIE: I got this bunch of friends of mine that ...

DUSTY: No gang bangs ...

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BLOODTHIRSTY BUTCHERS, 1969

(Script by Milligan / John Borske)

[Tobias, thuggish assistant to the murderous Sweeney Todd, gets into a confrontation with his scheming (and pregnant) girlfriend Rosie.]

ROSIE'S FLAT.

ROSIE: Give me a drink. (holding out glass)

TOBIAS: You've 'ad too many already.

ROSIE: Like 'ell I have. (Gets her own drink) So, what are we going to do about it?

TOBIAS: About what?

ROSIE: Don't play games with me, Tobias, I'm tired of it.

TOBIAS: Then get yourself someone else.

ROSIE: That would suit you fine, wouldn't it? Well, I ain't goin' to let you go. You had the pleasure, so you can pay the piper.

TOBIAS: My, ain't we poetic.

ROSIE: Listen, ducks, you ain't gettin' out of it. Little old Rosie ain't going to let you go.

TOBIAS: You think you're smart, don't you?

ROSIE: I'm a whole lot smarter than you give me credit for.

TOBIAS: Suppose I leave, what would you do?

ROSIE: I ain't going to tell you that. But, believe me, ducks, if I were you, I'd stay with little old Rosie.

TOBIAS: Suppose I arrange to get rid of it?

ROSIE: I don't want to get rid of it.

TOBIAS: Well, I do.

ROSIE: Well, that's too bad 'oney, because I ain't getting rid of no baby. That baby's stayin' right where it is. Cause that's the only hold I have over you. Rosie ain't so dumb.

TOBIAS: So that's it, is it?

ROSIE: That's it.

TOBIAS: I think I'd better make other plans.

ROSIE: That's a good idea, Tobias. You just do that and make sure every one of those plans includes little ol' me.

TOBIAS: You heard me. I said they don't include you.

ROSIE: How are you going to get out of it?

TOBIAS: I have ways.

ROSIE: What ways?

TOBIAS: Wouldn't you like to know?

ROSIE: I ain't goin' to play games with you, Tobias. I mean every word I say. You see, you 'ad the upper 'and before, now it's the other way around. That's the one thing you don't do is gives woman an upper hand, cause once you do, from then on honey, you've 'ad it.

TOBIAS: Rosie ...

ROSIE: Yes ...

TOBIAS: How long have we known each other?

ROSIE: About a year, why?

TOBIAS: I was just thinking.

ROSIE: About what?

TOBIAS: It's about time we went away together. Just the two of us. You and me. You'd like that, wouldn't ya?

ROSIE: Do you mean it? Do you really mean it? I'd be so happy. Where would we go?

TOBIAS: Aberdeen.

ROSIE: That's where me mum lives now.

TOBIAS: We could see her for a couple of days. Then we'd go travelin'. You'd like that, wouldn't ya?

ROSIE: I ain't seen 'er in a couple of years. When will we go?

TOBIAS: Monday.

ROSIE: Why, that's just a couple of days. I don't know if I can get off work that soon to go.

TOBIAS: Of course you can. You've taken off before. Remember that time we went to Manchester?

ROSIE: I don't know, Tobias.

TOBIAS: You want to go, don't you?

ROSIE: Yes.

TOBIAS: I'll tell you what I'll do. You write a note to Mr. Simpkins where you work and you tell him you're going to see your mother. And I'll take the note to him. And the best thing for you to do is not go to work. I'll tell him that you're sick that your Mother sent word that she needs you. And everything will be alright.

ROSIE: Will you 'elp me write one tomorrow? You know, I ain't too good at writing.

TOBIAS: You ain't too good at a lot of things. But you knows I loves you. Why don't we write that note right now?

ROSIE: Why?

TOBIAS: Because I won't have time to help you tomorrow. I'm going to help Mrs. Lovett all's I can so's I can go.

ROSIE: What should I say? (going to get pencil and paper)

TOBIAS: (sitting her down at chair by table) Say, Gone to see my mum (she has difficulty writing it, he has to help her print) Be back soon. (she writes) Now sign it ... Rosie ... (she does)

(She throws her arms around Tobias' neck, he reaches behind her back, picks up note, we see him slip it into his pocket. All the while, kissing her)

TOBIAS: I'm hungry. Ain't you got no bread in the house?

ROSIE: This is a fine time to get hungry. When I'm getting all excited.

TOBIAS: Oh, all right ... (She goes to another part of room. Tobias sits down, takes off shoes, stretches out on couch. She returns with bread board,

bread, cheese, and knife sticking out of bread) Make me a cheese sandwich, will you, ducks?

ROSIE: I feel like a restaurant.

TOBIAS: You know I is always hungry before sex.

ROSIE: Most guys, it's the other way around. (Tobias grabs her hand and pulls her down on couch)

TOBIAS: It ain't most guys. It's only me, remember that. (kisses her) (pushes her head to his crotch holds it there. Grabs her by the hair, kisses her on mouth, yanks her up on her feet, getting up at same time.) Rosie, I want you to remember this moment for the rest of your life. (He still has his hand on her hair, pulling it back. Other hand he rips open her blouse, cups her breast in his hand, kisses it. Releases hand from her hair. She stays in that position in ecstasy he keeps bringing his hand down behind her, reaches for the bread knife and it flashes, he brings knife around front as he is kissing her breast. Out of frame, we feel the impact of the knife in her lower regions, She gasps, his hand comes into frame with bloody knife. And as she is sinking slowly out of frame, his hand pulls up a handful of guts.)

SLOW FADE.

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COCTEAU, circa 1970

[It is 1908. Famed character actor Eduard De Max and sadistic writer William Bordeaux are fighting for the attentions of Jean Cocteau. All three are dolled up in extravagant costumery and makeup just this side of drag.]

JEAN: You don't like my poems?

WILLIAM: I didn't say that ...

JEAN: You implied as much ...

WILLIAM: I did not ... I stated that some of them are not as good as they should be ... I find some of them infantile, over-sentimental, rather sixth-

grade reader.

JEAN: I'm crushed ...

WILLIAM: Jean ... look at me ... (JEAN LOOKS THE OTHER WAY) I said look at me ... (JEAN DOES) You are so young and so very stupid to let anything I or anyone else say ... hurt you. You have your whole life before you and many, many times there will be many, many people that will not fall madly in love with your creations. ... A true Artiste must look the other way and continue creating anew. ... Always pushing forward ... searching ... finding new ways of expressing his thoughts ... desires ... emotions. If he listened to every negative thought and criticism that was thrown on him, he could be destroyed.... But an Artiste must have an inner steel door that he closes. ... This is his safety. ... This is his precaution against a sometimes hostile world. ... There is one Arch enemy an artist has ... Repetition ... Once an artist starts recreating and stops procreating ... he is doomed. ... A very slow but always fatal and inevitable death .... Always listen to your own thoughts ... Your own mind is sometimes the only true friend you have ... A really great artist must a great deal of his life be alone. ... Selfishness ... is his constant companion ... his true lover.

JEAN: The picture you paint of an artist's life is not a pleasant one.

WILLIAM: It's often a lonely one ... ask Eduard.

EDUARD: I don't find it so. ... I enjoy every moment I can squeeze out of life. ... There isn't a moment of my waking hours I don't embrace ...

WILLIAM: You are different than Jean and I. ... We are the true artists. ... We create anew. ... You only interpret someone else's thoughts ...

EDUARD: A moment ago you asked me as an artist my thoughts on your rather manic statement about a true artist's existence. ... I answer. ... Not in agreement with you ... and you in turn ... turn around and attack me for my answer. ... William ... you call Jean immature.... Have you looked at your image in a mirror?

WILLIAM: I made a mistake of addressing you in the first place. ... Your jealousy of my true love for Jean clouds any clear thinking that you might

have.

EDUARD: Bullshit ... you can't share anything with anyone. ... You are a very selfish and violent young man. ... Your talent as a writer is extremely mediocre. ... You have no discipline whatsoever ... What have you ever done that is notable? Have you ever had any of your works published? ... You talk of art and artists and yet you do absolutely nothing about it. ... An Artist creates. ... Well then go out and create. ... Do something with your life, my boy. ... An actor is only an actor when he is acting. ... The rest of the time he is a bullshit artist ... unless you have seen him act. ... A writer or any other artist is a bullshit artist unless you can read or see some of his work. ... So keep that big mouth of yours shut ... about art ... unless you can show the world at least a speck of your talent.

WILLIAM: What do you know about art? A ham actor ... pacing the footlights ... tearing up scenery ... not relating to any of his fellow actors ... working completely externally. ... There hasn't been one moment of truth in any of the characters that you have inflicted on your audience. ... At least Sarah has moments of truth in some of her performances ... but you ... not a chance.

EDUARD: You see, Jean ... this aging genius of yours is so insanely jealous of other's achievements that he can't even discuss. ... He must attack. ... You really should try to grow up, William. ... A man pushing forty doesn't really have many years left when he can pull the artiste bit ... Oh ... and dear boy, I'd stay away from lights that are too bright. ... They may betray your age. ... And a change of costume might do you well. ... Black brings out the lines around your eyes and those nasty lines around your mouth that you overwork. ... Grow up, William. ... Go out and do something ... anything ... you really don't have much time.

WILLIAM: You know, Jean ... there is really nothing in life as disgusting as an old cocksucker ...

EDUARD: You son-of-a-bitch ... (SLAPS WILLIAM)

WILLIAM: (SLAPS EDUARD)

EDUARD: (SLAPS WILLIAM)

WILLIAM: (SLAPS EDUARD)

JEAN: (STEPS BETWEEN THEM) Stop it ... Both of you ...

WILLIAM: Probably the only real moment you have ever played in your life.

EDUARD: How would you know?

JEAN: I can see now that I can never have both of you here at the same time. Why can't you just get along with each other ...

WILLIAM: Territorial rights.

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THE BITCH, circa 1969

(CUT TO: BATHROOM: JO LISTENS A SECOND, THEN OPENS THE DOOR A CRACK ... PEEKS OUT AT MICHAEL READING ... JO LOOKS AROUND THE BATHROOM AND SEES RACHEL'S COLOGNE BOTTLES ... SHE LOOKS THROUGH THEM UNTIL SHE HAS FOUND THE MOST EXPENSIVE ONE, THEN ... OPENS THE DOOR AND DELIBERATELY DROPS THE PERFUME BOT TLE ON THE FLOOR)

(CUT TO: RACHEL SITTING, HEARS CRASH, GETS UP)

RACHEL: What the fuck's going on? (SHE CROSSES TO THE BATHROOM) What the fuck's the matter with you? Can't you watch what you're doing? ... That's my favorite perfume ... shit! (SHE GETS DOWN TO PICK IT UP, SHOVING JO OUT OF THE WAY) Get out of the way! Why don't you go in the other room and clean? (TURNS ON FAUCET, WASHING BLOOD OFF FINGER) Ought to have my head examined!

JO: Here, let me ... (STARTS TO HELP)

RACHEL: OW! That hurts!

JO: My mother always says to squeeze it out ...

RACHEL: Jo, just go in the other room, will you?

JO: You're fat ...

RACHEL: Get the fuck outta here!

JO: You go sit down AND I'LL FIX THAT CUT. GO ON, NOW. (GLIDES RACHEL OUT OF DOOR) I know what to do now ...

(JO TURNS BACK TO MIRROR, DABS HER FINGER IN THE BLOOD ... ON THE SIDE OF THE SINK AND WRITES "CUNT" ACROSS THE MIRROR ... SHE THEN STARTS HUMMING TO HERSELF ... OPENS THE CABINET DOOR ... LOOKS FOR SOMETHING ... DOESN'T FIND IT, CLOSES THE DOOR ... TAKES TOILET PAPER ROLL AND EXITS BATHROOM ...)

(CUT TO: LIVING ROOM: JO TOSSES THE TOILET PAPER ACROSS THE ROOM, SO IT UNFURLS)

JO: Wheeeee! .... (CONTINUES TO PICK IT UP, THROW IT AND TOSS IT, SQUEALING AS SHE DOES)

RACHEL: (STANDING) God dammit. Stop it. What the fuck's wrong with you?

JO: (SCREAMS) I've been bad! You should punish me! I've been bad!

RACHEL: Jesus Christ!

JO: (RECITING FAST) My name is Josephine Wacowski. I'm six years old. I go to PS 32 and my mama's name is ... Josephine, just like mine. Don't you call me Josephine. My name is Jo. My mama's name is Josephine. Shit! Fuck! Cunt! Cunt! Piss! Shit! ... Don't you use those dirty words. Go stand in the corner. I'm gonna tell your mother on you, Josephine Wacowski. This is the last time, the last time, you hear! (CRYING) But ... mama ... mama ... I didn't use those words. Sister Veronica just doesn't like me. She hates me! Everybody hates me! Mama ... I didn't say those words ...

RACHEL: (GRABBING JO BY THE SHOULDERS, SHAKING HER) Stop it! Stop it! (SLAPS HER ... JO FREEZES) (QUIETLY) Jo, I'm gonna get your coat, I'm gonna put it on ya and I've got a nice chocolate bar for you, and you're gonna go back to Carolyn's ...

JO: I didn't finish yet ...

RACHEL: You finish cleaning some other time.

JO: I don't mean that.

RACHEL: Honey, you're finished.

JO: I've been bad, mama ... I've been bad ...

RACHEL: Jo ...

JO: Mama ... mama ... don't hurt me, mama. I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

RACHEL: What are you talking about?

JO: I've been bad, Mama, and you should spank me ... I'll go get the belt ... (SHE STANDS UP) Where is it?

RACHEL: Where's what?

JO: The belt ... You said that you would punish me for being bad and I want to know where you put the belt ...

RACHEL: Jo, I don't want you around here ... there's something wrong with you ... now you put your coat on and get out of here. (SHE STARTS FOR JO'S COAT, BUT JO GETS THERE FIRST ... SHE SNATCHES THE COAT AWAY FROM RACHEL AND STARTS BACKING AWAY FROM HER, BEGINNING TO CRY)

JO: I'm not going to until you spank me for being bad ... you said you would ...

RACHEL: Give me that coat, Jo! (REACHING FOR IT)

JO: No ...

RACHEL: Jo, I'm warning you, if you don't put on your coat and get the hell out of here, I'm calling the police and having you thrown out ...

JO: I'll tell them that you ... (PAUSE)

RACHEL: You'll tell them what?

JO: You won't like what I'm going to tell them ...

RACHEL: God dammit ... you asked for it ... (SHE LUNGES FOR JO AND GRABS HER ... THEY START STRUGGLING AND THEY TRIP AND FALL ... RACHEL GRABS HER KNEE IN PAIN) Son of a bitch . . .

JO: (SCRAMBLING TO HER FEET QUICKLY) Fatty, fatty two by four ... can't get through the kitchen door ... you're big and fat and ugly ... (SHE SPITS ON RACHEL)

RACHEL: (GETTING TO HER FEET) Why, you little cunt!!!

(RACHEL LUNGES AT HER, BUT JO IS TOO QUICK AND RACHEL LANDS ON THE SOFA)

JO: I hate you ... I hate you ... (JO SEES A LAMP, GRABS IT AND DELIBERATELY SMASHES IT TO THE FLOOR. RACHEL LOSES HER TEMPER AND LUNGES FOR JO ... THIS TIME GRABBING HER ... SHE STARTS SLAPPING JO AROUND ... JO FALLS TO THE FLOOR ... RACHEL RIGHT ON TOP OF HER ... RACHEL HAS COMPLETELY LOST CONTROL AND IS SLAPPING THE HELL OUT OF JO)

JO: No mama ... please don't hit me ... please mama ... mama ... mama ...

(FADEOUT)

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SEEDS,1968

(Script by Milligan and John Borske)

[The miserable Manning family - siblings Carol, Matthew, Michael, Buster, Margaret, and their evil, wheelchair-bound mother, Claris - are having a

reunion. It is not going well. We join boarding school reject Buster having a heated discussion with brother Matthew, a priest.]

MATTHEW: You should try to get along better with others.

BUSTER: Why should I? My life is worth four of theirs. I'm a much better human being. You know, Matthew I read about the Hitler regime. They had a beautiful set-up. If they hadn't been so anxious to take over the world, and stayed in their own back-yard, they would have made a beautiful world. If they'd just taken their time.

MATTHEW: You don't know what you're talking about.

BUSTER: (TURNS ON HIM VEHEMENTLY) Don't you ever say that! Don't you ever speak to me like that again! (QUIETLY) I do research on everything I say. Ask my teachers. That's why they can't stand me.

MATTHEW: Buster, sit down for a minute. (MATTHEW STARTS TO PUT HIS ARM AROUND BUSTER.)

BUSTER: (SCREAMS) Don't touch me! (SHAKING VIOLENTLY) Don't you dare touch me again! Don't you know what you've done? You ruined my life by touching me, or don't you remember? (BUSTER PICKS UP MATTHEW'S ROSARY.) You call yourself a priest? You go against everything you stand for. You're not fit to touch these.

(BUSTER SMASHES THEM AGAIN AND AGAIN ON MANTLE.) CLOSE UP.

CUT TO ... CLARIS' BEDROOM.

CLARIS: Tears don't mean a thing to me.

BUSTER: (LOOKS UP AT HER) What makes you think I meant them? (HE GETS UP AND WALKS TO WINDOW. CLARIS WHEELS TO DESK.)

CLARIS: Do you know how many letters I've gotten about you?

BUSTER: I don't know what you're talking about.

CLARIS: Like hell you don't! (PICKS UP LETTERS) Would you care to read some? They're very interesting. (THROWS STACK ON FLOOR.)

BUSTER: I don't want to see them.

CLARIS: Of course you don't. They're not very nice to look at. I've gotten at least three for every year you've been away.

BUSTER: You wouldn't have gotten them if you hadn't sent me away.

CLARIS: The best thing I ever did was send you to Military school and out of my life. You're such a little bastard.

BUSTER: Well, we know what that makes you, don't we?

(CLARIS WHEELS TO HIM AND STRIKES HIM IN THE FACE.)

BUSTER: Thanks, Mother. I needed that.

CLARIS: You're a bad seed. The whole bunch of you are bad seeds.

BUSTER: A bad seed comes from a diseased plant.

CLARIS: Why did you come in here?

BUSTER: I told you why. I felt sorry for what I said to Matthew.

CLARIS: No you didn't. Tell me the truth.

BUSTER: I want to know how much I'll inherit when I die.

CLARIS: I haven't made a will.

BUSTER: Don't you think that's dangerous? Someone might kill you. Then what would you do?

CLARIS: I know what I'm doing. I'm a very shrewd cookie.

BUSTER: What do you mean by that?

CLARIS: You'll lay awake tonight, trying to figure it out.

(BUSTER BREAKS INTO TEARS. UNCONTROLLABLE SOBBING. HE FALLS TO FLOOR.)

CLARIS: What's the matter with you? I think you should see a psychiatrist. You're a very sick boy.

BUSTER: I'm not sick. It's the world that's sick. It's a terrible place to live. They know nothing but hatred and deceit. I try to go to them with love and I get nothing in return. I ask for nothing more than you'd give a dog, and I get kicked each time. Why is it, Mother, that I can't have any peace?

CLARIS: You'll never have peace as long as you're alive.

BUSTER: Why? Why can't I?

CLARIS: Did you ever give me peace? (SHE PICKS UP LETTERS.) Five years ago you were thrown out of St. Thomas' Academy for having abnormal relations with another boy.

BUSTER: You can blame Matthew for that.

(CLARIS WHEELS AND PICKS UP ANOTHER LETTER.)

CLARIS: Four years ago. It was that school in Georgia. (SHE STARTS TO READ.) "My dear Mrs. Manning, this afternoon I received a letter that was confiscated from your son, in history class. This letter seems to be some sort of black-mail against one of your son's classmates."

(BUSTER COVERS HIS EARS.)

BUSTER: Stop! Stop it! I don't want to hear anymore!

CLARIS: Oh, you don't? But I have a whole floor full. Here's another one. This one's from the Benedictine school for boys. It seems they couldn't pin down the fires that have been started around the school and the evidence points at you. So they asked me to remove you. Remember, darling?

BUSTER: You bitch! You vile bitch!

CLARIS: You can't stand the truth. It's like sunlight to your darkness. (PICKS UP LETTER) This one's from the military school you went to last year. This one tells about how you almost drowned one of the students and then locked yourself in the bathroom. They had to break down the door. Then you tried to slash your wrists. (SHE GRABS HIS HANDS) There's hardly a trace. You didn't try very hard. Was it just to get attention? Why don't you try harder next time? Or won't there be a next time?

BUSTER: (HYSTERICAL) I won't hear anymore! I can't hear anymore! I don't want to hear! I won't! (HE RUNS FROM HOUSE) Leave me alone! I don't want to hear!

(CLARIS WHEELS TO TOP OF STAIRS.)

CLARIS: (SCREAMS) Go on! Run! Run all your life! You'll never escape! Run! Run! Run!

CUT TO ... PORCH. DOOR FLINGS OPEN. BUSTER RUNS DOWN TO BACK YARD TOWARDS WOODS.

CUT TO ...SECOND FLOOR. MICHAEL COMES OUT OF HIS ROOM. CAROL COMES OUT OF HERS.

MICHAEL: What's going on?

CAROL: It was Mother and Buster.

MICHAEL: What were they screaming about?

CAROL: I shouldn't have invited you all here. I should've known better.

MICHAEL: It's not all your fault.

(MICHAEL STARTS FOR HIS DOOR.)

CAROL: May I come in?

MICHAEL: Since when do you have to ask?

CUT TO ... BEDROOM. THEY ENTER.

CAROL: You don't know about Buster, do you?

MICHAEL: No. What?

CAROL: He's been thrown out of every school on the east coast. He's a thief, pervert, and liar. You didn't know all that, did you?

MICHAEL: I guess I really don't care.

CAROL: That's what I like about you, Michael. You've always been very honest. May I be honest with you?

MICHAEL: Why not? Go on.

CAROL: You didn't love Susan, did you?

MICHAEL: (PAUSE) No.

CAROL: Why did you marry her?

MICHAEL: She became pregnant. I thought it was mine and I married her.

CAROL: Why did you? We could have gotten out of it.

MICHAEL: Maybe I wanted to.

CAROL: Why?

MICHAEL: To get away from Mother. This house.

CAROL: Me?

MICHAEL: Perhaps.

CAROL: I'm glad she's dead. Did you drive her to it?

MICHAEL: No, I don't think so. There's something funny about that. I didn't think she had the nerve to do it. In fact, I don't think she did. Maybe I'm wrong. I just don't know.

(A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.)

MATTHEW: May I come in?

MICHAEL: The door's open.

(MATTHEW OPENS DOOR. SEES CAROL.)

MATTHEW: Oh, I'm sorry. Am I intruding?

MICHAEL: No. Come on in. It's all in the family.

CAROL: Would you like a cigarette?

MATTHEW: No. I don't smoke.

CAROL: Oh, I forgot. Priests don't have vices.

MATTHEW: Are you trying to say something?

CAROL: No. Did I say something?

MATTHEW: What was wrong with Buster?

CAROL: Mother's been after his scalp ever since he was thrown out of that last school. I guess she just got a little too close.

MATTHEW: I guess I'm just not used to all that noise.

MICHAEL: Oh, come off it, Matthew. You were weaned on it. That and other things.

MATTHEW: I'd forgotten what a dirty mind you have, Michael.

MICHAEL: That makes two of us. Or better still, let's be generous. Make it the whole family.

MATTHEW: I think I'll go back to my room.

MICHAEL: You'll be safer there.

CAROL: Stop it, Michael! (TO MATTHEW) I'll walk you to your room.

CUT TO ... HALLWAY. THEY'RE WALKING.

CAROL: I want to talk to you.

MATTHEW: What about?

CAROL: I'd like to know about Barbara.

MATTHEW: There's nothing to tell now. (THEY REACH DOOR)

CAROL: It'll do you good to get it off your chest. Please, Matthew, tell me about it. Perhaps I can help.

MATTHEW: Come inside.

CUT TO ... FOREST. BUSTER RUNNING FRANTICALLY. HIS CLOTHES SLASHED AND TORN FROM THE BRANCHES. HE COLLAPSES. HIS ARMS OUTSTRETCHED. HIS HAND REACHES OUT AND CLUTCHES GROUND IN FRONT OF HIM. HIS FACE BURIED IN GRASS. HE PULLS HAND BACK QUICKLY WITH PAIN. CUT TO ... HAND BLEEDING. MEDIUM SHOT: REACHES FOR BROKEN BOTTLE. STANDS UP. HOLDS BOTTLE TO SUN. STARTS TURNING AROUND SLOWLY. QUICKLY BRINGS BOTTLE DOWN ON WRIST.

BUSTER: This is for Carol. (JABS AGAIN.) And Michael. And Drew and Margaret. And, last but not least, Mother!

JAMS BOTTLE IN THROAT. REPEATEDLY.

SWIRL CAMERA.

FILMS AND PLAYS

FILMS

All films written, directed, and photographed by Andy Milligan unless noted.

Films marked with an asterisk are currently lost. Milligan's films were always being butchered - by himself and by distributors - so running times are approximate. Release dates are also approximate - Andy kept no records. I have included running time / playdate and / or release dates contemporaneously noted by the American Film Institute in their indispensible volume, *The American Film Institute Catalogue, Feature Films 1961-70*, Volume F-6. This information is followed by the credit (AFI). Thanks as well to Tim Lucas for running time information.

*Mrs. Warren's Profession**

*Before Breakfast**

8MM FILMS OF PLAY PRODUCTIONS NOT WRITTEN BY ANDY. LOST. 1964?

Film of Milligan's 1962 Cino production of Genet's Deathwatch *allegedly exists, but I've never seen it.*

Vapors

1965; 32 MIN B&W

SCRIPT: Hope Stansbury

STARRING: Gerry Jacuzzo, Bob Dahdah, Hal Borske, Matt Baylor, Larry Ree

(Shown by Andy himself at various experimental film houses in 1965, then released as a sexploitation short by Chellee Wilson, 1967)

Released on tape by Something Weird Video on their Third Sex Cinema *collection - same version on* The Body Beneath *Image Entertainment DVD. There is a pristine 35mm print in the author's collection.*

The Promiscuous Sex (working title: *Liz*)*

NYC OPENING, JUNE 22, 1967; 94 MIN (AFI)

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

SCREENPLAY: Clay Guss

STARRING: Judith Rentzer, Richard Mangoode, Judy Eckhardt, Lee Forbes, Candy Hammond, Kay Carney, Jacqui Colton, Matt Baylor

The Naked Witch a.k.a. *The Naked Temptress**

1967; 80 MIN (PRESSBOOK)

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

SCREENPLAY: Clay Guss

STARRING: Beth Porter, Robert Burgos, Bryarly Lee, Maggie Rogers, Josef Bush, Hal Borske, Gerry Jacuzzo, Lee Forbes, Vernon Newman

Note: *This title is sometimes confused with a Larry Buchanan picture of the same name via a screw-up in the AFI book.*

Depraved! (working title: *Sin Sisters 2000 AD*)*

FRESNO, CA, SHOWING, SEPTEMBER 27, 1967; 75 MIN (AFI)

JER PICTURES

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

STARRING: Annie Linden, Robert Burgos, Carol Vogel, Josef Bush, Hope Stansbury

The Degenerates (working title: *Six For Kicks*)*

CHAMPAIGN, IL, SHOWING, APRIL), 1967; 73 MIN (AFI)

JER PICTURES

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

STARRING: Bryarly Lee, Marcia Howard, Annie Linden, Susan Howard, Laura Weiss, Hope Stansbury, Robert Burgos, Vernon Newman

Compass Rose (unfinished, unreleased)

1967?

B&W 16MM REEL

SCRIPT: Josef Bush

STARRING: Robert Service, Hal Borske, Annie Linden, Candy Hammond, Joe Davies, Kenny Burgess, Gerry Jacuzzo, Matt Baylor, Minette, Jenneth Webster

*Kiss Me, Kiss Me, Kiss Me!**

JANUARY 1968 (AFI); 80 MIN

EXTRAORDINARY FILMS

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

SCREENPLAY: Josef Bush

TITLE SONG: Harry Huret

STARRING: Natalie Rogers, Don Williams, Peter Ratray, Joy Martin, Angela Peters, Matt Baylor, Gerald Jacuzzo, Gary Stone, Fernando, Esther Travers

The Ghastly Ones

CHARLOTTE, NC, OPENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1968;72 MIN (AFI)

JEROME-FREDERICK PRODUCTIONS/JER PICTURES

COLOR 35MM BLOWUP

SCREENPLAY: Hal Sherwood, Milligan

STARRING: Hal Borske, Maggie Rogers, Richard Romanus, Carol Vogel, Matt Baylor, Fib LaBlanque, Hal Sherwood, Don Williams, Neil Flanagan

Released on tape by Video Home Library, unavailable. Released in the eighties in the UK by Scorpion Video as Blood Rites*, subsequently banned.*

Recently discovered campaign material indicates the film played in Mexico under the title Espectros.

*Tricks of the Trade** (working titles: *The Sex Set-Up, Run for Your Wife*)

NYC OPENING, OCTOBER 30, 1968; 83 MIN (AFI)

EXTRAORDINARY FILMS

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

SCREENPLAY: Gerry Jacuzzo, Milligan

STARRING: Mary Carter, Jonathan East, Natalie Rogers, Maggie Rogers, Hal Borske, Josephine White, June Blake, Mostifa Mond, Neil Flanagan, Robert Patrick

*The Filthy Five**

CHAMPAIGN, IL, NOVEMBER 8, 1968; 96 MIN (AFI)

EXTRAORDINARY PICTURES

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

SCREENPLAY: Gerry Jacuzzo, Milligan

STARRING: Annie Linden, Fred Forrest (a.k.a. Matt Garth), Jacqui Colton, Gerry Jacuzzo, Maya Reid, Mark Jenkins, Larry Ree, Hal Borske, Maggie Dominic, Selena Robbins, Maggie Rogers, Nick Orzel

Seeds a.k.a. *Seeds of Evil*

DECEMBER 1968; 84 MIN (AFI); 78 MIN (*Seeds of Evil* SW videotape release)

AQUARIAN PRODUCTIONs/HARRINGTON FILM DISTRIBUTING Corp, HOFFBERG PICTURES

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

PRODUCERS: Allen and Rosily Bazzini

SCRIPT: John Borske, Milligan

STARRING: Maggie Rogers, Candy Hammond, Robert Service, Neil Flanagan, Susan Cassidy, Patti Dillon, Paul Eden, Gene Connelly, Maggie Dominic, Jonathan East

Seeds of Evil *version released on tape by Something Weird. Some scenes cut from the original* Seeds *can be seen in a trailer on Something Weird's* Twisted Sex #17. *See also Tim Lucas's astute detective work in* Video Watchdog #52.

*Gutter Trash**

NYC OPENING, JUNE 19, 1969; 74 MIN (AFI)

B&W 35MM BLOWUP

EXTRAORDINARY FILMS

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

RATED 'X'

STARRING: Candy Hammond, Eddie Frackman, Patti Dillon, Paul Eden, Susan Cassidy, Neil Flanagan, Zita Litvanas

*The Bitch** a.k.a. *The Mongrel* (unfinished, lost)

STARRING: Jacqui Colton

*The Weirdo** (original version - unreleased, lost)

STARRING: Michael St. Shaw, Melinda Dockery, Maya Reid

Nightbirds

1970; 90 MIN

B &W 35MM BLOWUP

CINEMEDIA FILMS / NOVA INTERNATIONAL

STARRING: Berwick Kaler, Julie Shaw, Bay White, Felicity Sentence, Susan Heard

(believed to have played only once at the Cameo Theatre in NYC)

An 86-minute answer print (slightly cut for trailer use) is believed to be the only print in existence.

The Body Beneath (rumored alternate title: *Vampire's Thirst*)

BUFFALO, NY, DECEMBER 4, 1970; 85 MIN (AFI)

COLOR 35MM BLOWUP

CINEMEDIA FILMS / NOVA INTL

STARRING: Jackie Skarvellis, Emma Jones, Gavin Reed, Berwick Kaler, Felicity Sentence, Colin Gordon

Released on tape in a 74-minute version by World Video (unavailable) and an 82-minute version by Something Weird. I also have a print in my collection.

82-minute version (taken from the original 16mm master) released on DVD via Image Entertainment. DVD also includes Vapors *and a handful of Milligan trailers.*

Torture Dungeon

1970; 79 MIN

COLOR 35MM BLOWUP

CONSTITUTION FILMS

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

RATED 'R'

SCRIPT: John Borske, Milligan

STARRING: Gerry Jacuzzo, Susan Cassidy, Patti Dillon, Donna Whitfield, Hal Borske, Matt Baylor, Maggie Rogers, Neil Flanagan, Richard Mason, Dan Lyra, Pat Garvey

Released on tape by Midnight Video, unavailable.

Bloodthirsty Butchers

1969; 85 MIN (AFI) COLOR

35MM BLOWUP

CONSTITUTION FILMS

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

RATED 'R'

SCRIPT: John Borske, Milligan

STARRING: John Miranda, Annabella Wood, Berwick Kaler, Jane Helay, Michael Cox, James Barrie

Released on tape in a 78-minute version by Midnight Video, unavailable, but currently available from Something Weird.

Guru, the Mad Monk (rumored alternate title: *Garu, the Mad Monk*)

BUFFALO, NY, OPENING, DECEMBER 4, 1970; 62 MIN (AFI)

MAIPIX ORG / NOVA INTL

COLOR 35MM

SCRIPT: M.A. Isaacs (press book credits Milligan)

STARRING: Neil Flanagan, Judy Israel, Paul Lieber, Jackie Flanagan a.k.a. "Webb," Jack Spenser, Gerry Jacuzzo, Frank Echols, Ron Keith

Released on tape by Sinister Cinema.

The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here! (working title: *Curse of the Full Moon*)

1972; 92 MIN

COLOR 35MM BLOWUP

RATED 'PG'

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

STARRING: Hope Stansbury, Berwick Kaler, Jackie Skarvellis, Joan Odgen, Douglas Pfair, Ian Innes, Andy Milligan (gun salesman), Eric Concklin (rat salesman)

Released on tape by Midnight Video, unavailable.

The Man with Two Heads (rumored alternate title: *The Man with Two Faces*)

1972; 92 MINUTES COLOR

35MM BLOWUP

WILLIAM MISHKIN MOTION PICTURES

RATED 'PG'

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

STARRING: Dennis DeMarne, April Connors, Julia Stratton, Gerry Jacuzzo, Berwick Kaler

Released on tape by Midnight Video, unavailable, and Something Weird.

Fleshpot on 42nd St. a.k.a. *Girls of 42nd St.*

1972; 76 MIN

Color 35MM BLOWUP

WILLIAM MISHKIN MOTION PICTURES, INC.

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

STARRING: Bob Walters a.k.a. Harry Reems, Diane Lewis, Neil 'Lynn' Flanagan, Fred Lincoln, Ron Keith, Dan Dietrich, Paul Matthews

RELEASED ON TAPE BY SOMETHING WEIRD. There is another, slightly different, version floating around. Neither are complete, according to the script and what I learned via Milligan. The press book lists a 'triple X' 84-minute version and an 'X' 81-minute.

*Supercool** a.k.a. *Sharon* (unfinished)

1973

PRODUCER: Lew Mishkin

*Dragula**

ANDY MILLIGAN: Direction / Camera only?

WITH: Cal Culver, Hal Borske, Fernando

*Jungle Bust** (unreleased)

PRODUCER: Walter Kent (Andy Milligan: some additional footage / editing only)

Blood

1973; 57 MIN COLOR

35MM

BRYANSTON

PRODUCER: Walter Kent

STARRING: Martin Reymert, Allan Berendt, Patti Gaul, Mike Fischetti, Pichulina Hempi, Hope Stansbury

RELEASED ON TAPE in a UK Pal version by Ivar Services, unavailable.

Legacy of Blood a.k.a. *Legacy of Horror*

1978

COLOR 35MM

KEN LANE FILMS

SCREENPLAY: Peter Schmideg (most likely Milligan)

STARRING: Pete Barcia, Elaine Boies, Chris Broderick, Louise Gallandra, Joe Downing, Dale Hansen, Martin Reymert, Marilee Troncone

Released on tape by Gorgon/MPI (83-min version) and in a PAL UK version (78 min) by Replay Video.

House of Seven Belles (unfinished, circa 1979)

COLOR 35MM

STARRING: Hal Borske, Louise Schiumo, Randa Kriss, Elaine Boies

Toga Party

(ANDY MILLIGAN: inserts only)

Released on tape in the 1980s

Carnage

1983; 91 MIN

COLOR 35MM

PRODUCERS: Lew Mishkin, Michael Lee

STARRING: Dennis Malvasi, Leslie Den Dooven

Released on tape by Media Home Entertainment, unavailable.

Red Rooster

1983; APPROX. SIX HALF-HOUR EPISODES

PRODUCER: Dan Tobey

STARRING: Hal Borske, Leslie Den Dooven

Unreleased.

Monstrosity

1987 PROD; 89 MIN; SHOT IN 1987

A LEW MISHKIN PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH FILMWORLD INTL. PROD.

PRODUCER: William Mishkin

EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: Alex Kogan, Jr. and Barry Tucker

STARRING: Hal Borske, Carrie Anita, Michael Lunsford, Joe Balogh, David Homb, Frank Echols, Wayne Keeton, Charlie Beesley

Unreleased. Apparently there is an Italian dubbed version around.

The Weirdo

1988 PROD, 1990 RELEASE; 91 MINUTES

GREEN TIGER PICTURES

PRODUCED BY Kenneth Haker and Neva Friedenn

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Paul Maslak

Music By Michael Meros and Jeff Peters

STARRING: Steve Burington, Jessica Straus, Lynne Angus, Nick Butterfield, Lynne Carl, Melanie Ewbank, Naomi Sherwood, John Miranda

Released on tape in 1990 by Raedon Home Video, unavailable.

Surgikill a.k.a. *Screwball Hospital Central*

1988 PROD; 88 min

WRITTEN BY Sid Caplan, Sherman Hersch, Andy Milligan

STARRING: Lynne Angus, Richard Bolik, Bouvier, Madge Bryant, Michael Buckband, AI Silver, Linda Collins, John Miranda

Released on tape by Media Arts Productions.

Note: Milligan also filmed a couple of classic plays during his mid / late 1970s Staten Island period, notably Candida *and* Ghosts. *They are presumed lost.*

ADDENDUM

Sandra H, 1988 (unproduced screenplay)

"*Sandra H* is weird. It's about telekinesis, psychometry. This girl's a virgin, she's eighteen, and this magician appears at a party and does a trick with her - he takes her virginity. Mentally. After they do this rabbit trick. And she meets this professor – Selinsky - who turns her on to psychometry. She starts using this power and becomes sort of a Carrie. I wrote it before *Carrie*, of course."

TREATMENTS:

*Stageblood, Wozeck, No Entry, Hate New York, Sex, Couplets, Black and Blood, Bums, Katie Was No Lady, Dinner of Twelve, S. O. S., Come Summer, Dr. Jekyll, Wolfville, Picture of Doreen Gray, New York Ninja (*partial screen play*), Menage, SRO*

PLAYS

The Funeral a.k.a. *Dearly Beloved*

Vivie (musical of *Mrs. Warren's Profession*), music and book

Section 8 (circa 1970- 71)

Cocteau (circa 1970-71)

The Bitch (circa 1969-70)

Nightbirds (circa 1969-70)

Royalty (circa Troupe era)

Clouds (Troupe era)

"*Clouds* was written for Judith May, a character woman at the Troupe. She needed a play. It's about two retarded people in a home."

Reflections (Troupe era)

Sunsets (Troupe era)

"You've got everybody in limbo - John Garfield, Gertrude Stein, Ben Franklin, Cleopatra, Juliet, who's a real bimbo, and 'You,' who hasn't been born yet. Those are the characters of Sunsets-no set, just a table with drinks. I wrote Sunsets for Dennis Malvasi. He thinks John Garfield is his father."

Cinderella '85

Modern-day Cinderella musical written with Rosemary Olcott.

Fugue a.k.a. *Twins* (Hollywood era, unfinished)

"Two actors learn they have AIDS and plan suicide. Perfect vehicle for Elizabeth Taylor and Roddy McDowell: type of role she could chew up."

Julius (lost, late 196os?)

"I always resent the fact I lost that damn *Julius*. It's a play against the Catholic church, set in the year 2050 or something. Takes place in the Vatican on New Year's Eve. The church is on its last legs. The last pope, they had him on heroin so they could control him.

"They take this kid from the streets - he's got these dirty old clothes, poor as a church mouse - and they decide they're gonna make him Pope. Because he's the only one left in 2050 that still believes in God, hee hee. I call the character Cardinal Jacuzzo. It was written for him.

"There's a black cardinal and a Jewish cardinal - 'we're the token nigger and the token yid, whaddaya expect?' The second act begins with this old whore

that's been lobotomized and they kill her. Oh, it's wild, really wild.

"And there's this little kid who's the Vatican whore, Antonio, a male prostitute. They brought him in at ten, kept him in bondage for three years, shitting and pissing on him. He tells the new Pope what's goin' on.

"Cardinal Jacuzzo asks the others, 'How can you be so evil? ' He says, 'I get all the wines, the best food, get my clothes cleaned by servants.' And he takes out some amyl nitrate. And he's sniffing this popper as Cardinal Jaccuzo is on his knees praying. That's the end of the first act.

"They kill Antonio and dump him on his bed. And just when Cardinal Jacuzzo's going to expose them all he calls a meeting with the world press at dawn - they kill him Julius Caesar style, stab him to death. You hear the church bells and the other Cardinals telling the press, 'Our beloved Pope passed on from a heart attack.' Hee hee. *Julius*. I was very happy with that play. Gerry said, 'Isn't it kind of talky?' I put it away forever. Then it disappeared. It's the only thing I've ever regretted losing."

SOURCES

ALL INTERVIEWS took place approximately 1983-1991, then again briefly in 2000.

I also drew on an archive of hundreds of papers, letters, stills, etc., left to me by Andy Milligan. All stills were shot by Andy Milligan (except where otherwise noted).

PART I. THE CAFFE CINO

JM interviews: Andy Milligan, Matt Baylor, Hal Borske, George Nelle, Michael Warren Powell, Lucy Silvay Peluso, Johnny Dodd, Angelo Levullo, Elmer Kline, Taka Nakano, Frank Thompson, Bobby Siefker, Esther Travers, Charles Loubier, Richard Loubier, Phyliss Loubier, Joe Davies, Bob Dahdah, Kenny Burgess, Ellen Stewart, Hope Stansbury, Robert Patrick, Bob Heide, 'Gary Stone,' Phoebe Mooney, Paul Foster, Martin Reymert, Ondine a.k.a Bob Olivio, Jacqui Colton, Jackie Flanagan, Claris Nelson, Wally Androchuck, Michael Warren Powell, Nanoosh de la Motte, Liz Shanklin, Ellen Maris, Charlotte Oberley, Dean Selmier, Jack Delucia, JoAnne Proccocino, Helen Hamft, Jim Perkinson, Shirley Stoller, Walter Burns, Janet Hessler, David Starkweather, Bob Cashey, Bob Milne, Bob Hamlin, Mary Chase, Minette, Archer King, Vernon Newman, Dennis Corbett, other sources.

Paul Foster quote, page 19, taken from *Other Stages*, date unknown. Reprinted in *The Caffe Cino and Its Legacy* (see bibliography).

Bob Heide quote, page 25, taken from "Cockroaches in the Baubles," *Other Stages*, February 22, 1979.

All Joe Cino quotes taken from "Joe Cino's World Goes Up in Flames" by Michael Smith, *Village Voice*, March 11, 1965.

PART II. TIMES SQUARE

JM interviews: Andy Milligan, William Mishkin, Lee Hessell, Joseph Brenner, Steve Brenner, Mary Temkin, Straw Weisman, Joe Sarno, Lew

Mishkin, Phil Todaro, Terry Levene, Bob Endleson, Jim Wheelock, Simon Nuctern, Kemper Peacock, Jerry Balsam, Sam Sherman.

The Ingrid Caven quote is from a 1993 interview with Camille Nevers reprinted in *Chaos as Usual*, Lorenz, ed. (see bibliography).

The Fassbinder "incest" quote is from a 1971 interview with Christian Braad Thomsen printed in *Rainer Werner Fasshinder*, Kardish / Lorenz, eds. (see bibliography).

PART III. LONDON, STATEN ISLAND, NYC

JM interviews: Andy Milligan, Fernando, Brandy Carson, Annie Linden, Peter Ratray, Patti Dillon, Natalie Rogers, John Wallowitch, Fred Forrest, Candy Hammond, John Borske, Carol Vogel, Genan Tardu, Jeremiah Newton, Ron Keith, Dennis Malvasi, Leslie Den Dooven, Michael Chiodo, Rosemary Egan, Scott Means, Jerry Murphy, Jack Walker, Elaine Boies, Louise Schiumo, Paul Lieber, Allen Bazzini, Jenneth Webster, Dan Handley, Jeannie Cusick, Charles Hohmann, Charlie Richards, Tony Garofano, Calvin Holt, Carol Vogel, Hugh Giddins, Robert Burgos, Paul Eden, Walter Kent, Norman Beim, Donald Kvares, Heather McLeod, Randa Kriss.

PART IV. HOLLYWOOD

JM interviews: Andy Milligan, Wayne Keeton, Frank Echols, Charlie Beesley, John Miranda, Hal Borske, Fred Conwell, Neva Friedenn, Scott Means, other sources.

PART V. ST. PAUL

JM interviews: Louise Howe, Herbert Howe, Kyoko Katayama, Harley Hull, other sources.

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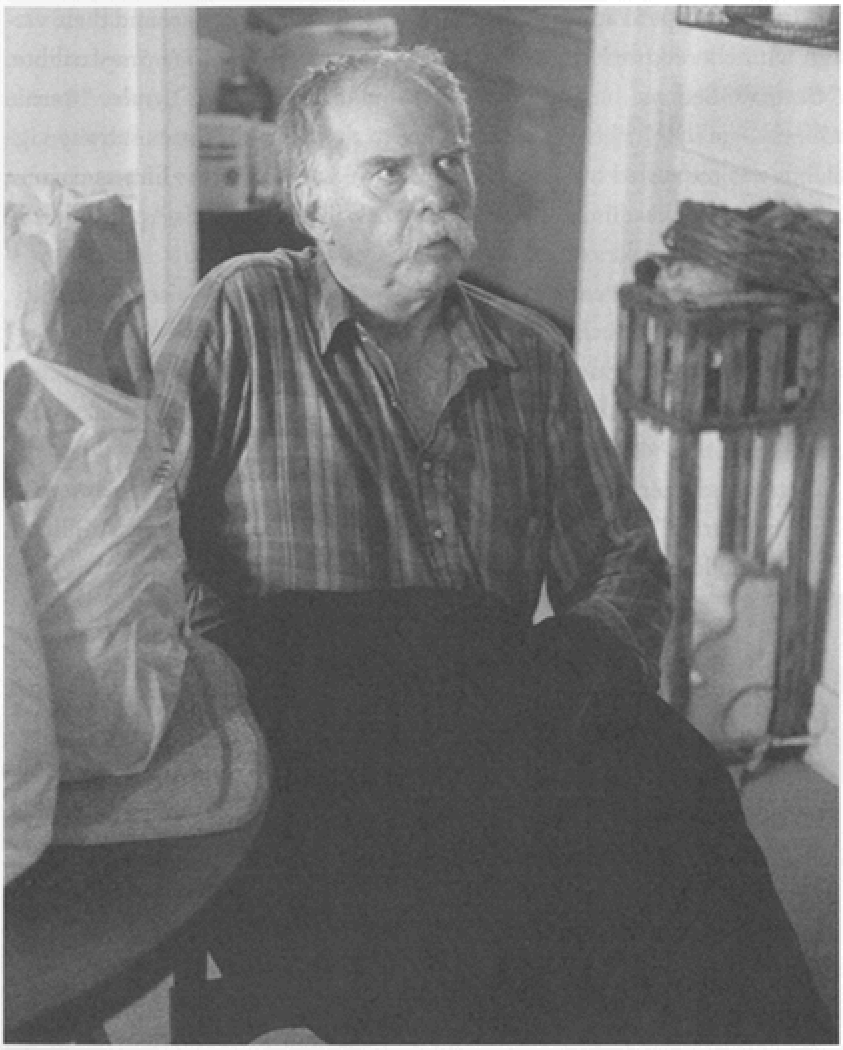
Jimmy M, 2001

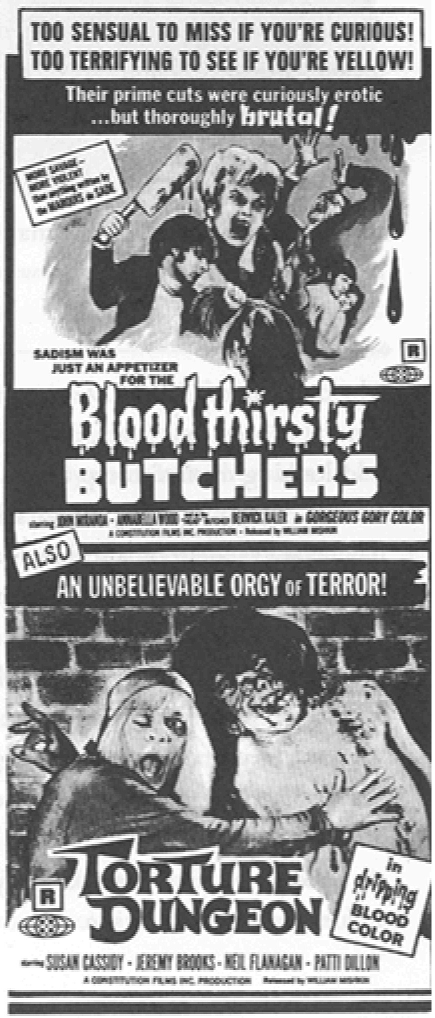
THE AUTHOR

JIMMY McDONOUGH has contributed to such publications as *Variety, Film Comment, Mojo, Spin,* and *Juggs*, but is best known for his work in the *Village Voice*, writing intense, definitive profiles of such artists as Jimmy Scott, Neil Young, Gary Stewart, and Hubert Selby, Jr. He is also the author of *Shakey: Neil Young's Biography*. Jimmy currently resides in the Pacific Northwest.

New Wave massacre. Andy's "punks" meet their demise in a dirty Silver Lake car wash. 1987 Monstrosity *production still by Thomas Vozza.*

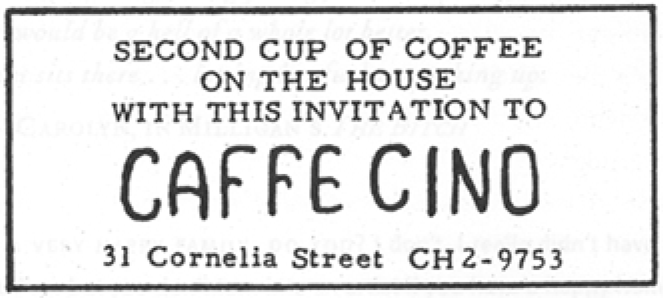


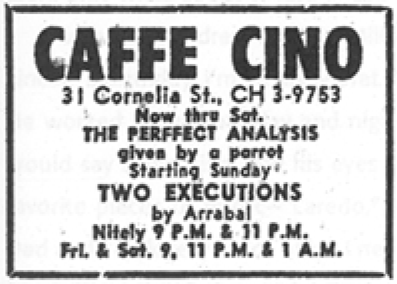
Milligan and his "masturbation bag." Monstrosity *production still by Thomas Vozza.*



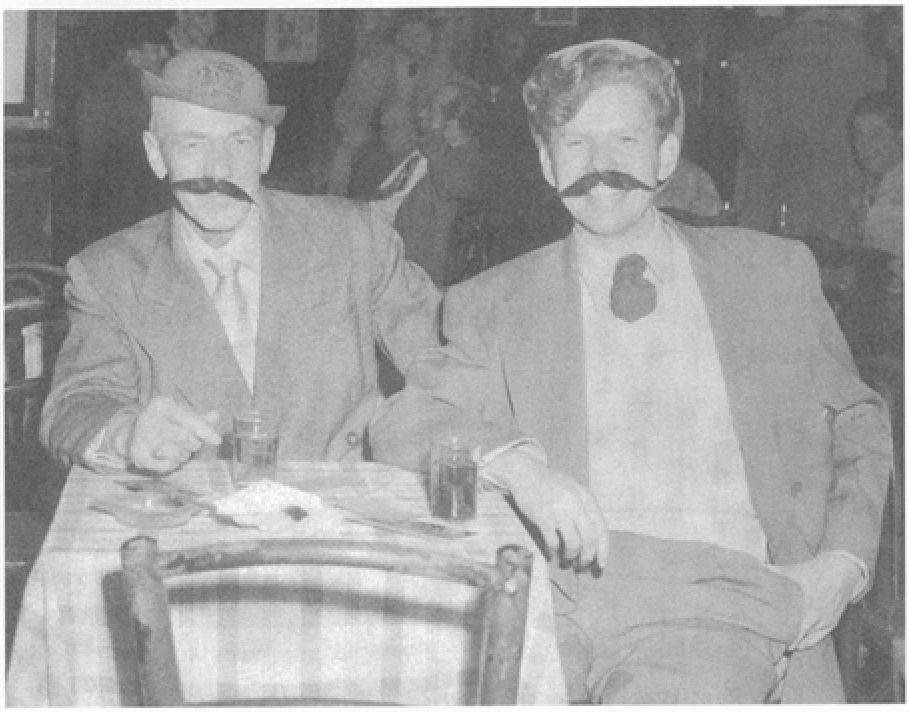
Typical William Mishkin campaign for a 1970 Milligan double bill. Note obtuse reference to I Am Curious (Yellow), *one of the first porno hits the previous year.*

Milligan's 1970 epic, Torture Dungeon. *Pomp and circumstance on the scabby shores of Staten Island.*

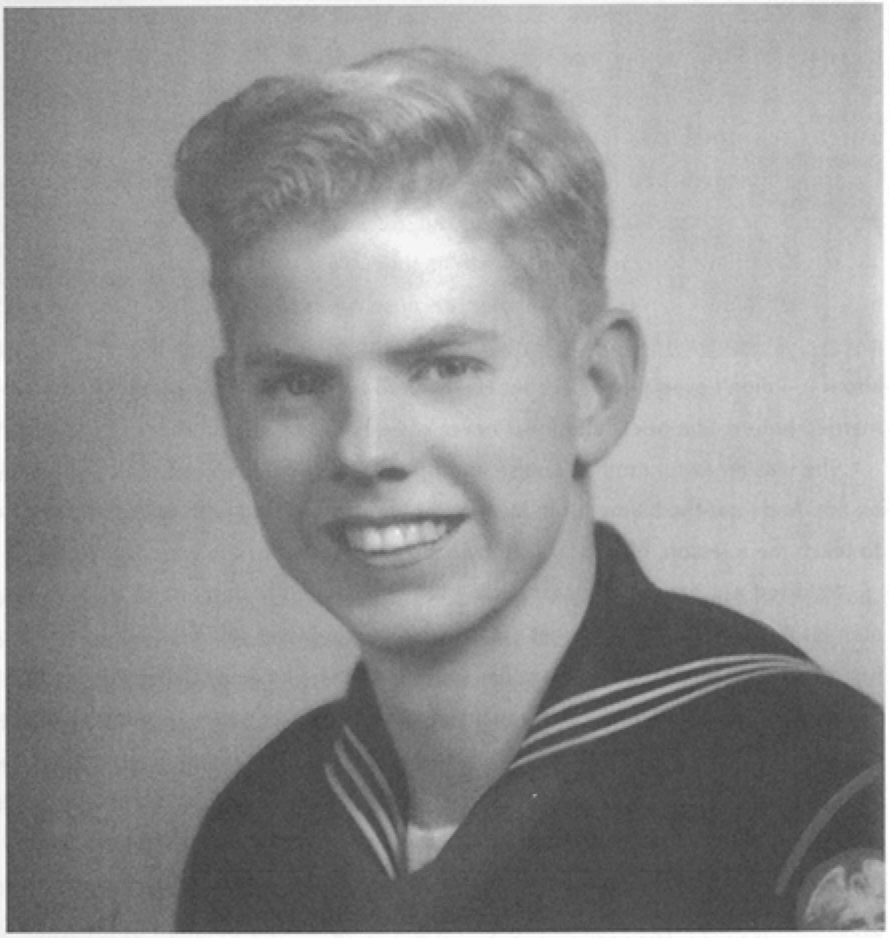

SECOND CUP OF COFFEE
ON THE HOUSE
WITH THIS INVITATION TO
CAFFE CINO
31 Cornelia Street CH 2-9753


CAFFE CINO
31 Cornelia St., CH 3-9753
Now thru Sat.
THE PERFFECT ANALYSIS
given by a parrot
Starting Sunday
TWO EXECUTIONS
by Arrabal
Nitely 9 P.M. & 11 P.M.
Fri. & Sat. 9, 11 P.M. & 1 A.M.

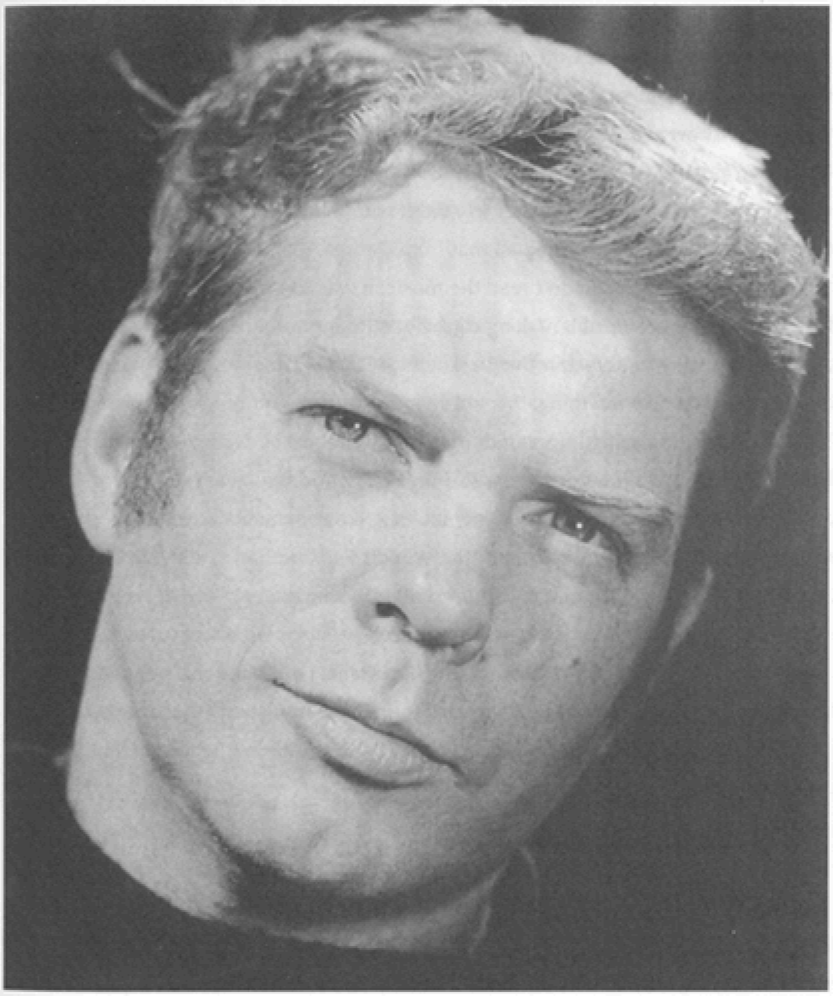
CAFFE CINO
31 Cornelia St., CH 3-9753
Thru Sat.
Adaption of "ONE ARM"
by Tennessee Williams
Opening Sunday
Tennessee Williams'
TALK TO ME LIKE THE RAIN
Nitely 9 P.M. & 11 P.M.
Fri. & Sat. 9, 11 P.M. & 1 A.M.



"Dad and I look very much alike. I never really got to know him." Andy Senior and Junior, date unknown. (author's collection)

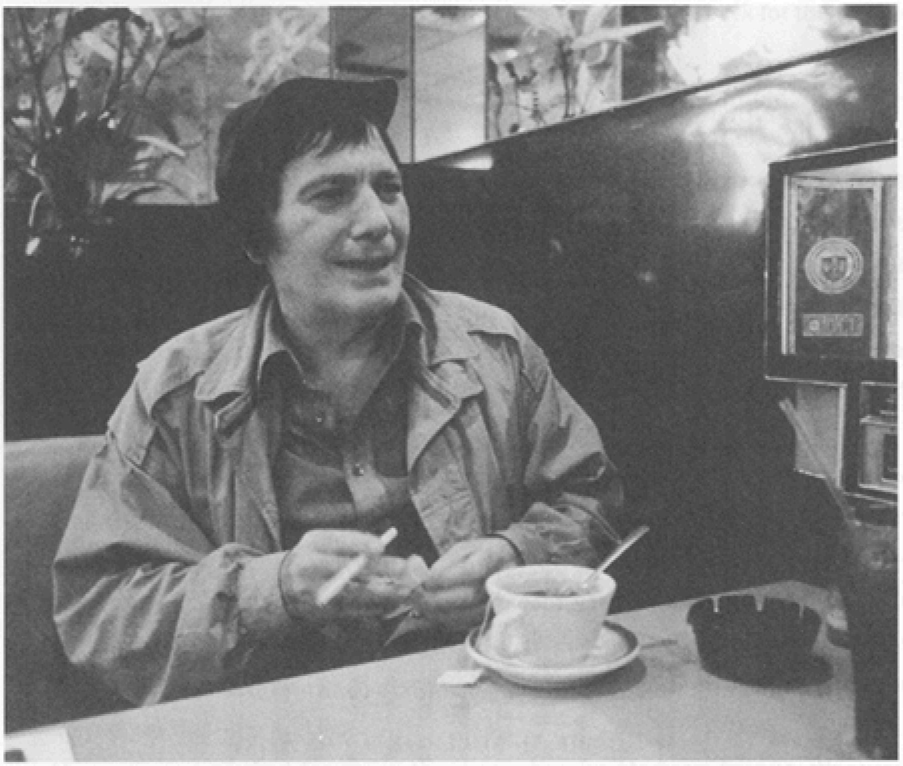


Sailor Andy, 1940s. "The service was like an escape hatch from the loony bin." (author's collection)

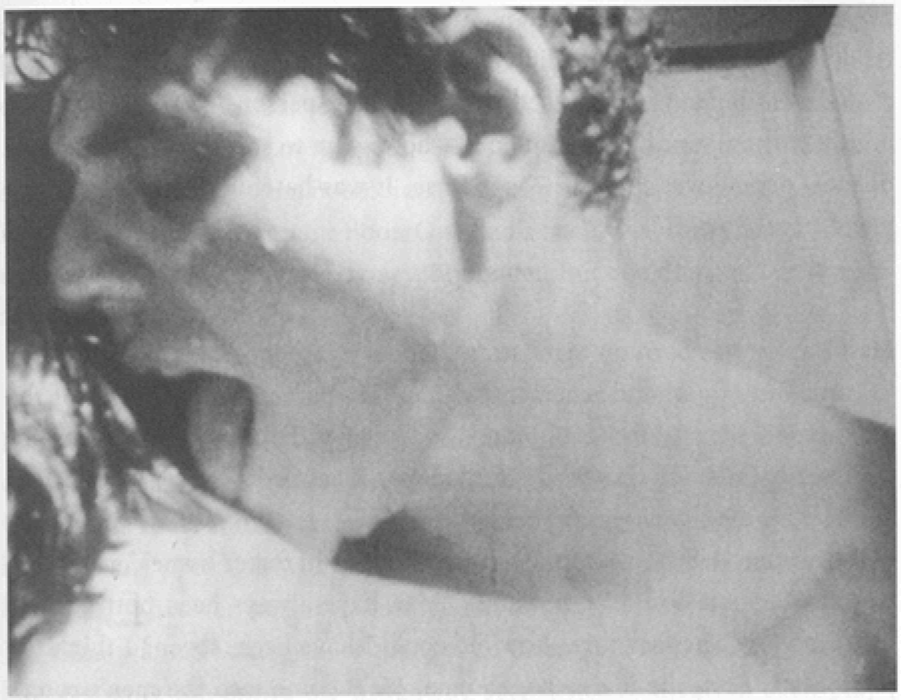


Milligan the actor, 1950s. "I was infantile, very immature. A spoiled brat. You get told you're a good actor, egotistical shit like that. I must've been impossible." (author's collection)

Dresses by Raffiné, late 1950s. "If they bitched about a fitting, I'd rip the thing off them and throw 'em out." (author's collection)

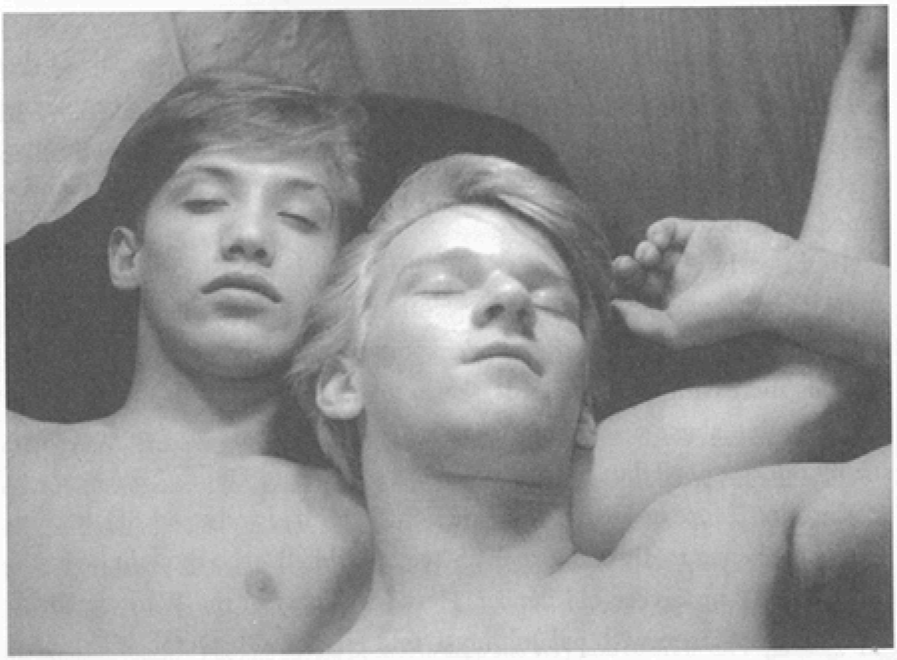


"Matt has the devil in his eyes." Matt Baylor, New York City, late 1980s. Photo by Yara Clüver.

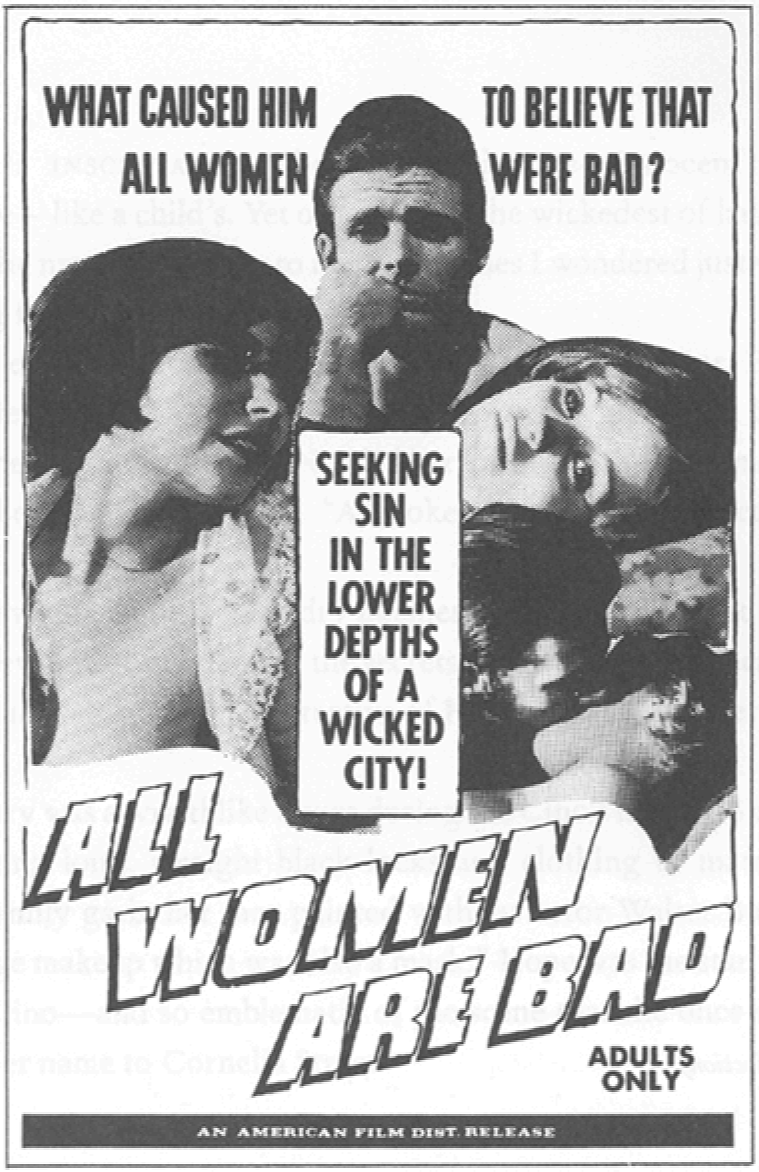


"My ass was photographed more than anybody else's in moving pictures." Matt Baylor licking some neck in Andy Milligan's first feature release, 1967's The Promiscuous Sex.

"In this room you're always protected." Joe Cino manning the espresso machine, Caffe Cino. (photo courtesy of Bob Dahdah)



"Baby" Bobby Siefker and the late Paul Palmotto, both in langorous repose at the Frank Thompson salon. "Paul fell over on a very big occasion." (author's collection)


WHAT CAUSED HIM
ALL WOMEN
TO BELIEVE THAT
WERE BAD?
SEEKING SIN IN THE LOWER DEPTHS OF A WICKED CITY!
ALL WOMEN ARE BAD
ADULTS ONLY
AN AMERICAN FILM DIST. RELEASE

Daughter of Dracula (Hope Stansbury) marries son of the Werewolf (Allan Berendt) in the ridiculous Blood, *1973*.

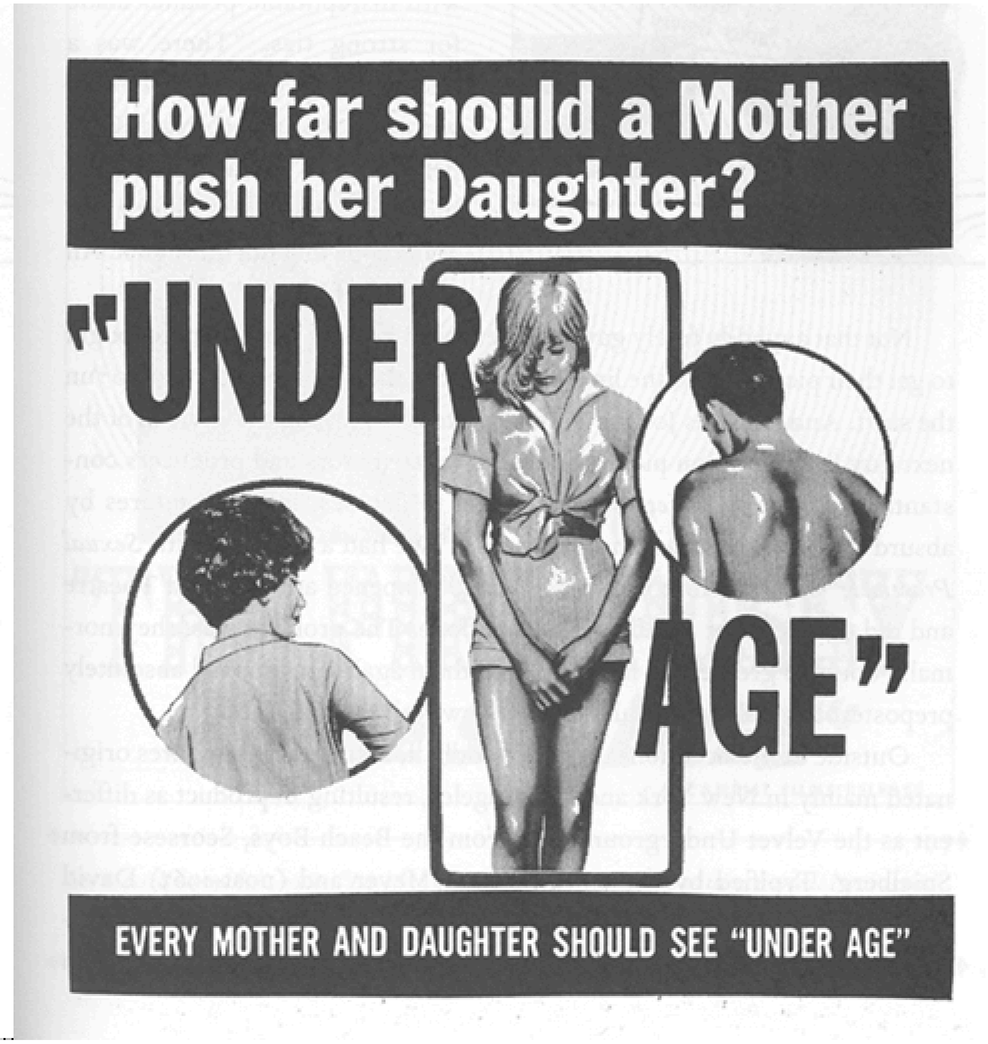
Hope Stansbury as an evil lesbian talent agent terrorizing Annie Linden in Milligan's Depraved!, *1967. "It was like my astral projection. . . . there was something exciting about it."*

"A real S&M film." Patricia Neal and Gary Cooper in Milligan favorite The Fountainhead *(1949).*

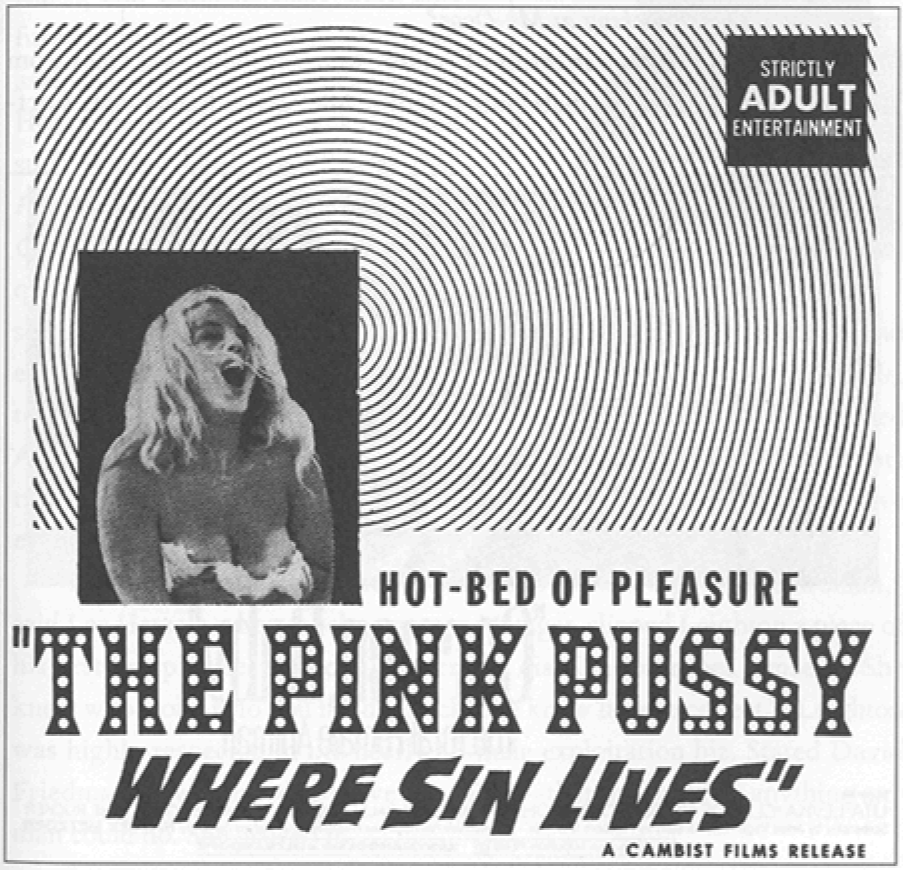
"A major homosexual film comparable to Anger's Fireworks.*" Ad for* Vapors *showing at the Bridge, December 1965. (author's collection)*

NOW
L.A.'s FIRST HOMOSEXUAL FILM FESTIVAL BREAKS every ATTENDANCE RECORD!
AND NOW... OUR FOURTH AND MOST ACCLAIMED PROGRAM...
SHIRLEY ("the Connection") CLARKE'S "PORTRAIT OF
Jason-MALE hustler!"
UN-CUT AND UNCENSORED!!
BOLD... SENSITIVE... IMAGINATIVE!
THE YEAR'S MOST CONTROVERSIAL UNDERGROUND FILM...
PLUS
STEAMROOM Vapors
IS ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
FROM THE TEAROOM TO THE STEAMROOM!
and 'BOYS' OUT TO BALL COLOR
ALSO "Male Nudist Desert Safari" COLOR!
SPECIAL MIDNITE SHOW - SAT., JULY 20 at 12 MIDNITE!
PARK
710 SO. ALVARADO
CALL 483-8893 OPEN DAILY AT 9:45 A.M.
FLASH...WE GIVE HIPPIES A BREAK!

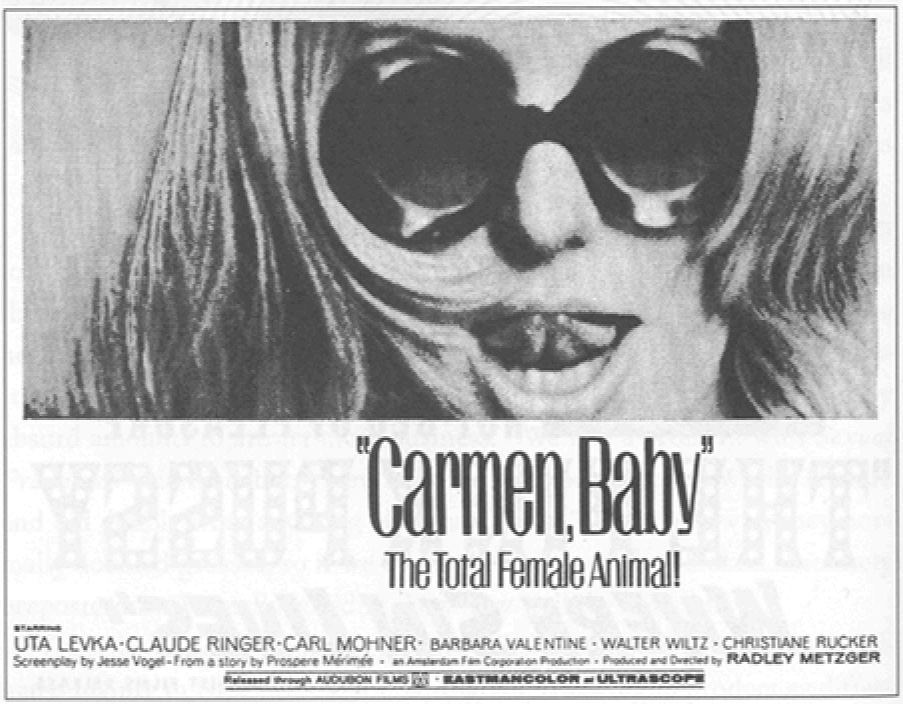
Neil "Lynn" Flanagan about to service Ron Keith in Fleshpot on 42nd Street, *1972.*


How far should a Mother push her Daughter?
"UNDER AGE"
EVERY MOTHER AND DAUGHTER SHOULD SEE "UNDER AGE"

AN ADULT VENTURE INTO A WOMAN'S INNER-MOST BEING...
THE AGONY OF LOVE
(FROM LADY TO TRAMP)
starring
Pat Barrington
Sam Taylor
Parker Garvey
produced by Harry H. Hershey–Edward Everett
screenplay & directed by
William Rotsler

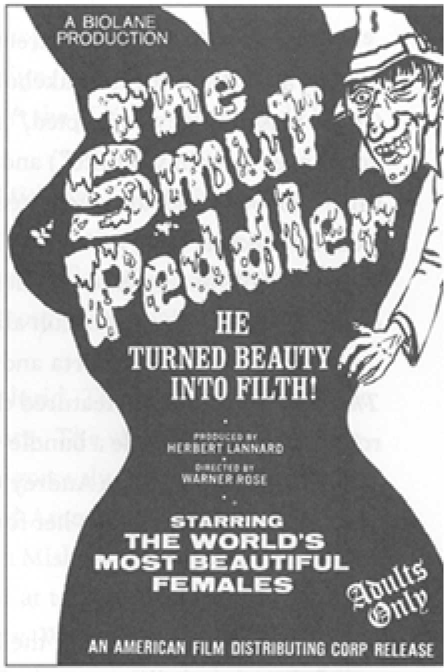


Lee Hessell campaign, 1966. "I used to make a lot of money out of getting busted. I was tryin' to figure out a way to bust my own pictures!"



Typical campaign for Radley Metzger Audubon product circa 1967. "Radley was the MGM product," said David F. Friedman. "A patina of taste more European than Hollywood."

The Smut Peddler—*the kind of diseased crudity Stanley Borden's American Film Distribution specialized in. 1965.*

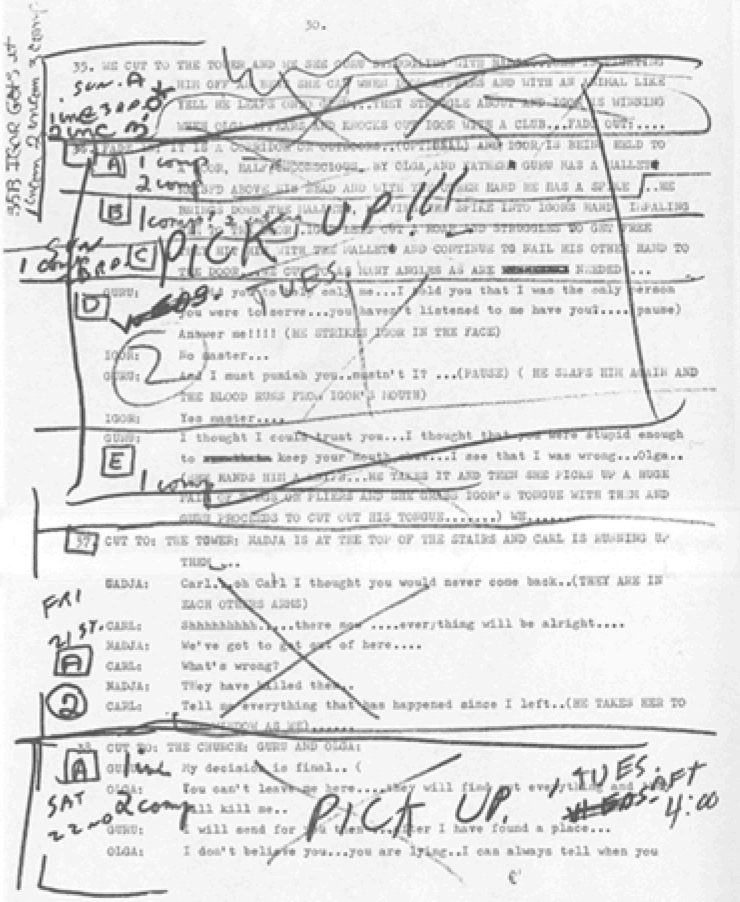


Beautifully lurid campaign by Mishkin competitor Joseph Brenner for The Lonely Sex, *1959*.

"See the Strip Dice Game!" Mishkin's campaign for The Orgy at Lil's Place, *1963. "That picture was passed without one frame being lifted because of censorship."*

Four kooky couples (two from Gutter Trash *above, two from* The Ghastly Ones, *below).*

Boy-girl interaction seemed to bring out the strange in Milligan's cockeyed camera.


30.

35. WE CUT TO THE TOWER AND WE SEE [illegible] HIM OFF [illegible] AND WITH AN ANIMAL LIKE YELL HE LEAPS [illegible] ...THEY STRUGGLE ABOUT AND IGOR IS WINNING WHEN OLGA APPEARS AND KNOCKS OUT IGOR WITH A CLUB...FADE OUT....

36. FADE IN: IT IS A CORRIDOR OR OUTDOORS..(OPTIONAL) AND IGOR IS BEING HELD TO A DOOR, HALF UNCONSCIOUS, BY OLGA AND NATHAN. GURU HAS A MALLET RAISED ABOVE HIS HEAD AND WITH THE OTHER HAND HE HAS A SPIKE ...HE BRINGS DOWN THE MALLET, DRIVING THE SPIKE INTO IGORS HAND, IMPALING IT TO THE DOOR..IGOR [illegible] AND STRUGGLES TO GET FREE [illegible] WITH THE MALLET AND CONTINUE TO NAIL HIS OTHER HAND TO THE DOOR. [illegible] AS MANY ANGLES AS ARE [redacted] NEEDED ...

GURU: [illegible] you to [illegible] only me...I told you that I was the only person you were to serve...you haven't listened to me have you?....(pause) Answer me!!!! (HE STRIKES IGOR IN THE FACE)

IGOR: No master...

GURU: And I must punish you..mustn't I? ...(PAUSE) (HE SLAPS HIM AGAIN AND THE BLOOD RUNS FROM IGOR'S MOUTH)

IGOR: Yes master....

GURU: I thought I could trust you...I thought that you were stupid enough to [illegible] keep your mouth shut...I see that I was wrong...Olga.. (SHE HANDS HIM A [illegible]...HE TAKES IT AND THEN SHE PICKS UP A HUGE PAIR OF [illegible] ON PLIERS AND SHE GRABS IGOR'S TONGUE WITH THEM AND GURU PROCEEDS TO CUT OUT HIS TONGUE.......) WE......

37. CUT TO: THE TOWER: NADJA IS AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS AND CARL IS RUNNING UP THEM....

NADJA: Carl...oh Carl I thought you would never come back..(THEY ARE IN EACH OTHERS ARMS)

CARL: Shhhhhhhhh.....there now ....everything will be alright....

NADJA: We've got to get out of here....

CARL: What's wrong?

NADJA: They have killed them..

CARL: Tell me everything that has happened since I left..(HE TAKES HER TO [illegible] AS WE)......

38. CUT TO: THE CHURCH: GURU AND OLGA:

GURU: My decision is final.. (

OLGA: You can't leave me here....they will find out everything and [illegible] will kill me..

GURU: I will send for you then ...after I have found a place...

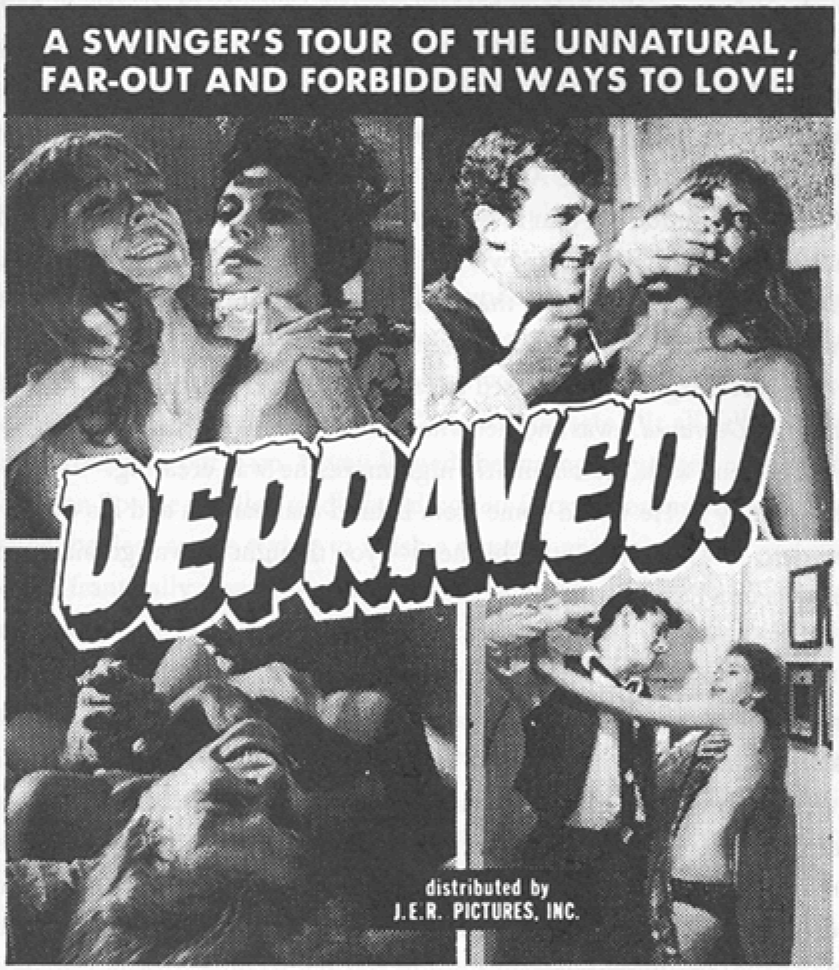
OLGA: I don't believe you...you are lying..I can always tell when you

Typical Milligan script page from Guru, the Mad Monk, *1970. "We would help with the lights, the sound, but honestly, Andy did it all." (author's collection)*

Beth Porter and hunchback Lee Forbes in The Naked Witch, *1967. "Terrible actor . . . his parents owned the house. He played the lead and we got Manasquan."*

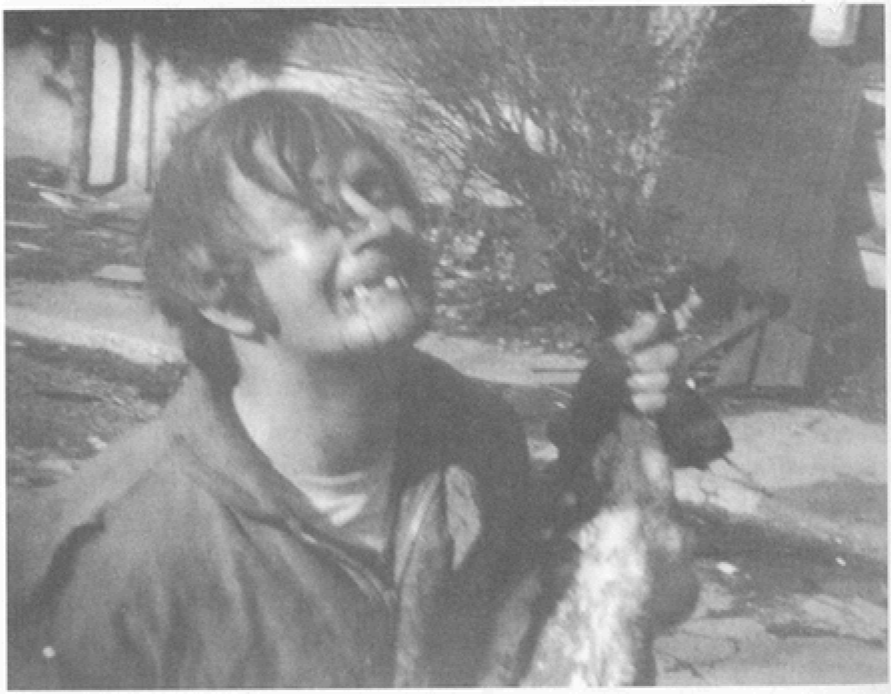
Maggie Rogers and Beth Porter in The Naked Witch. *"Poor Beth Porter was in bruises when Maggie Rogers took after her with the belt. Beat the shit out of her."*

Hope Stansbury (left) and cohort up to no good in The Degenerates, *1967.*



Depraved! *ad campaign, 1967.*

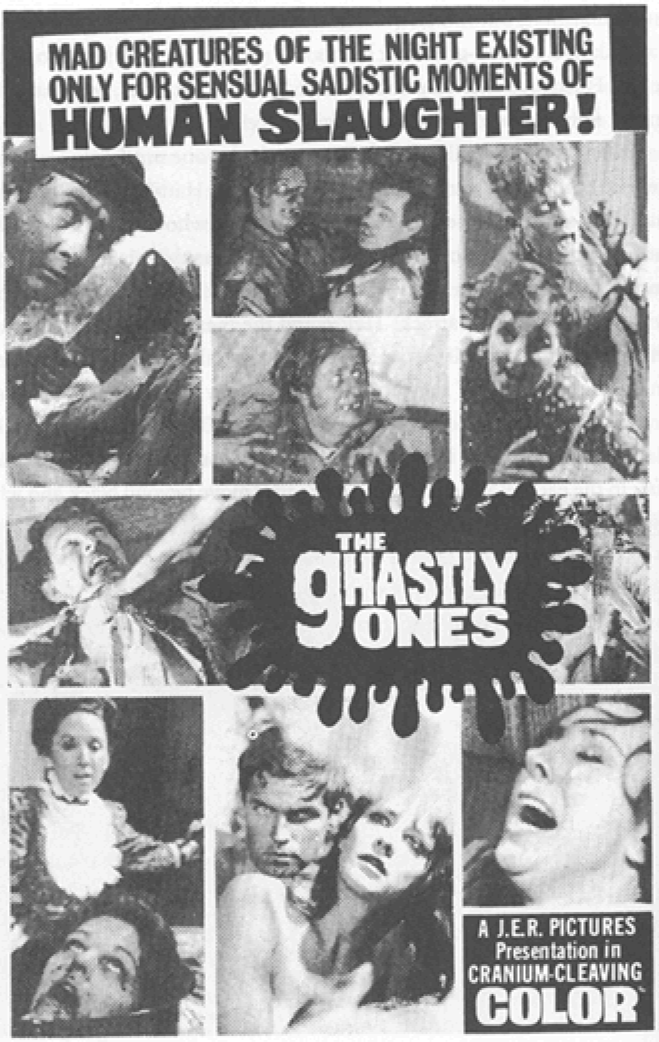
....



Hal Borske snacking on a real—albeit deceased—rabbit in The Ghastly Ones, *1968. "I was really gagging . . . a mouthful of blood."*

Hal Borske runs amok in The Ghastly Ones. *"Here I am full of blood with a meat cleaver, and we're walkin' home to Andy's house!"*

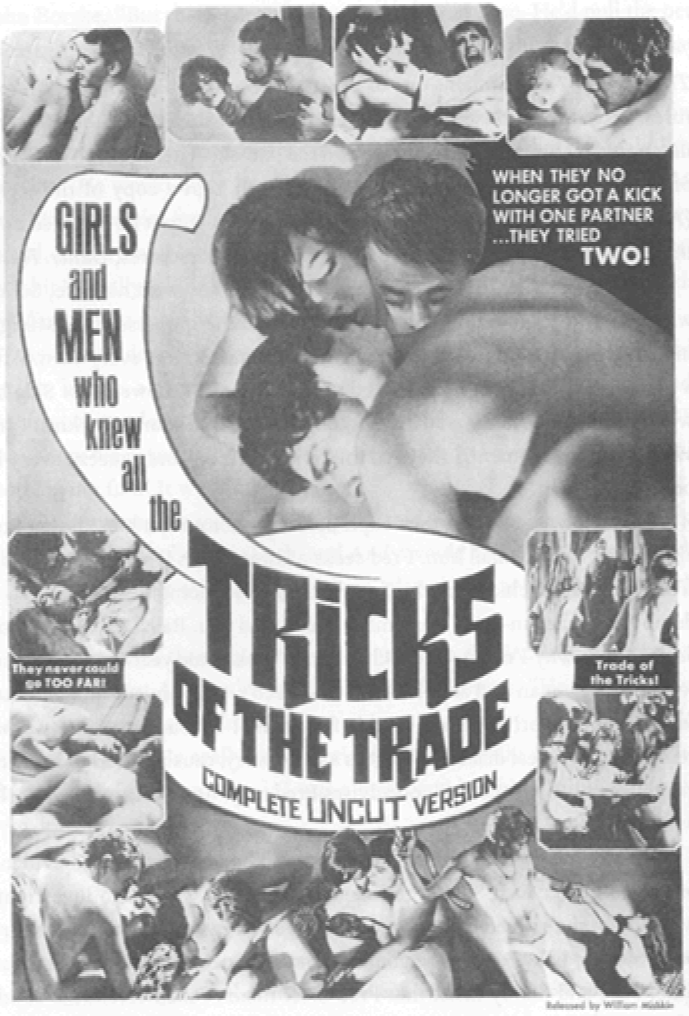
This is a movie still? Random chicanery from The Ghastly Ones, *"a home movie from Bedlam."*



The Ghastly Ones *campaign. "I thought truth in advertising wouldn't be bad because the picture really was ghastly."*

Kiss Me Kiss Me Kiss Me!, *1968.* On the Waterfront *meets* The Misfits *on a budget of ten cents. "In the story I referred to them as Marilyn and Marlon."*

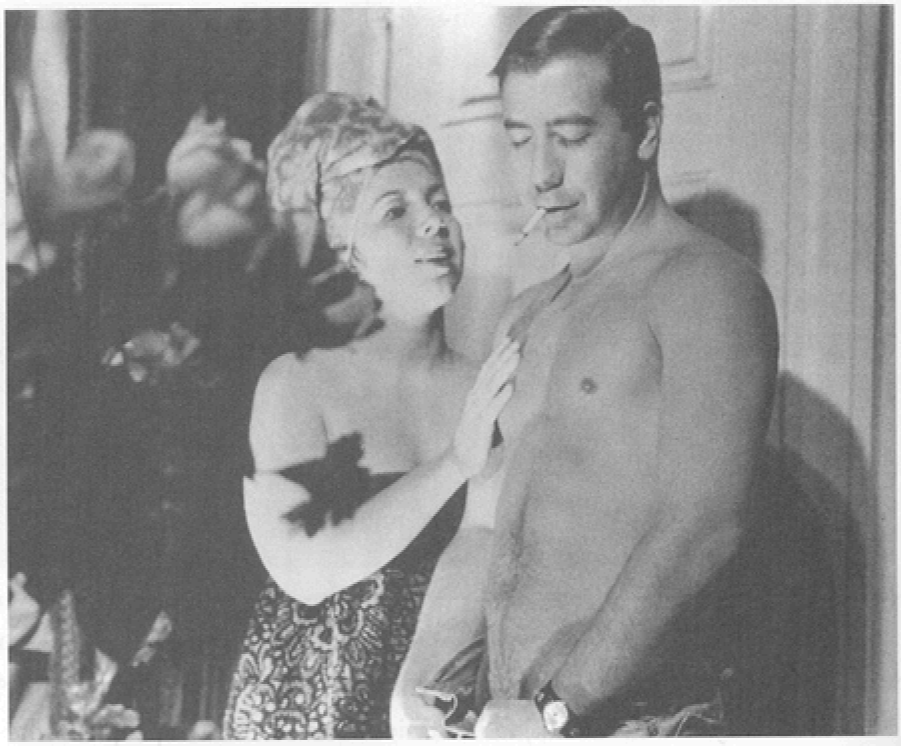
Natalie Rogers and Don Williams get down in Kiss Me. *Note Natalie's prominent fat lip. "Andy loved that big blister on her mouth."*



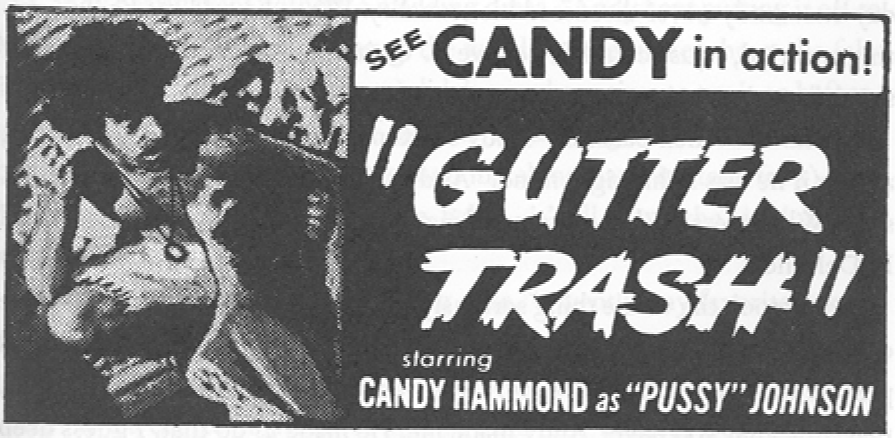
Tricks of the Trade, *Milligan's 1969 bisexual blackmail boogie-woogie. Note the rather brazen male smooch displayed on the upper right corner of the one-sheet. Mishkin intimated that the explicit homosexuality curtailed box office.*

The Filthy Five, *1968. One of Mishkin's greatest campaigns. Note transsexual Selena Robbins in the middle of a manwich. "Mishkin couldn't believe Selena wasn't a real woman . . . he turned white."*

Candy Hammond boning up on her reading in Seeds, *1968. "Now, in Europe, they like Andy."*



Rough trade. Candy Hammond and Eddie Frackman, Gutter Trash, *1969.*



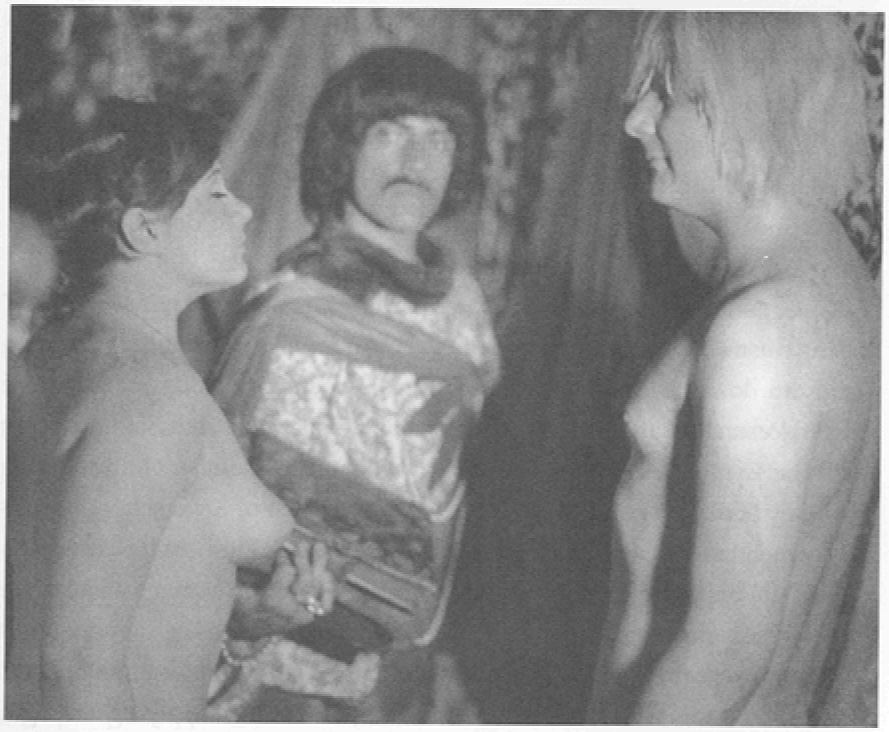
The wedding of Cap'n Andy. Left to right: Andy, his stepmother, Taka, Candy, Andy Senior. "It was wonderful, except that our guests stole all the wedding gifts." (photo courtesy of Taka Milligan)

Patti Dillon, Jonathan East, Maggie Rogers, and antique dealer Jessie Bigelow in Seeds. *Note the infamous Milligan mirror and floral display. "Look at any Andy Milligan film and you're gonna see those fuckin' roses, guaranteed."*

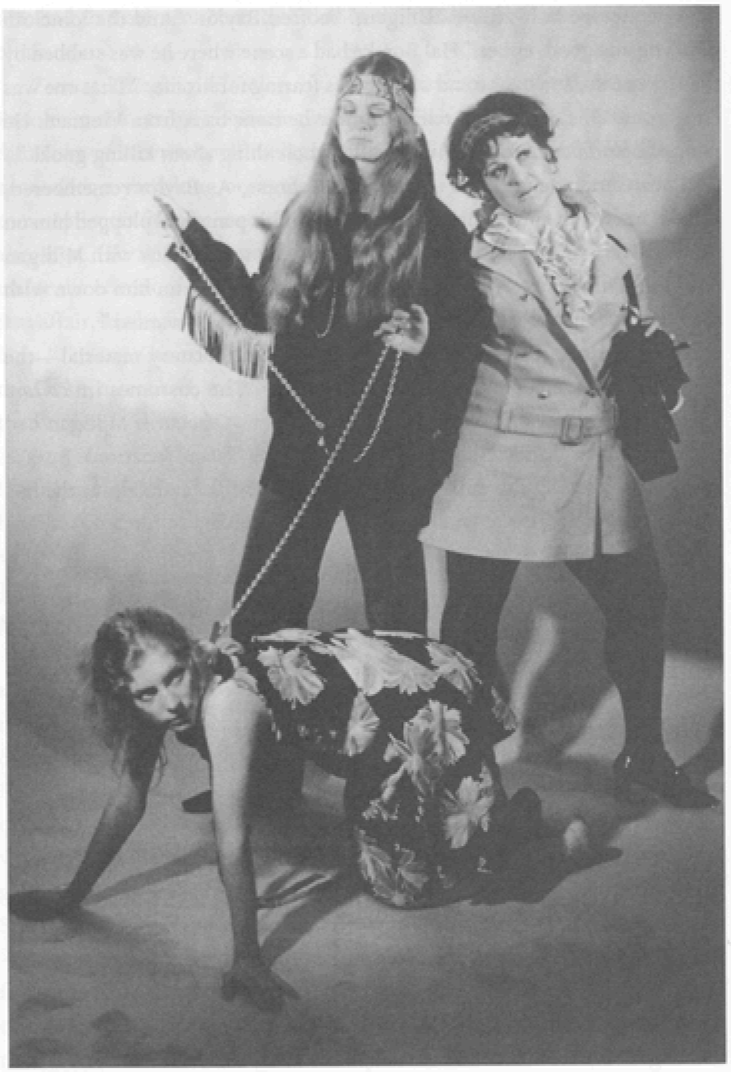
Susan Cassidy about to hock love juice into Father Neil Flanagan's piehole, Seeds. *"Spitting? That's theatricality, babe."*

"I'm not sick, it's the world that's sick." Gene Connelly as Buster in Seeds.

"I'll ride on your train if you'll play in my house." *Candy Hammond and Robert Service in* Seeds.

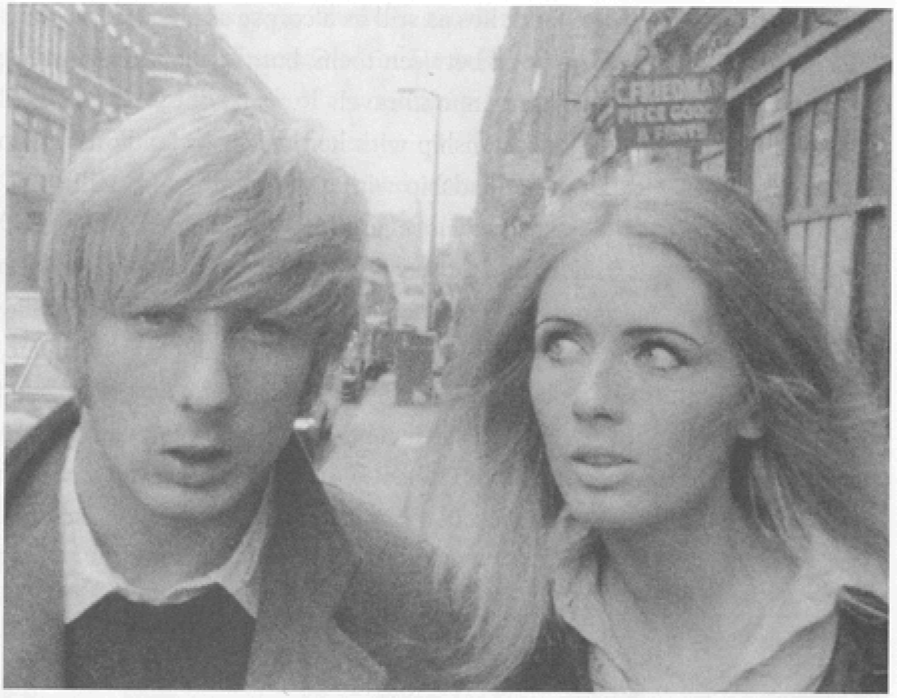


"We stood up and our costumes fell off!" Heather (Susan Cassidy) marries Alfred (Hal Borske) as the evil Duke of Norwich (Gerry Jacuzzo) glares in the background. Torture Dungeon, *1969*.



The Bitch, *circa 1969. A lost masterpiece? Jacqui Colton on right.*

Rare shot of Andy directing. The Bitch.

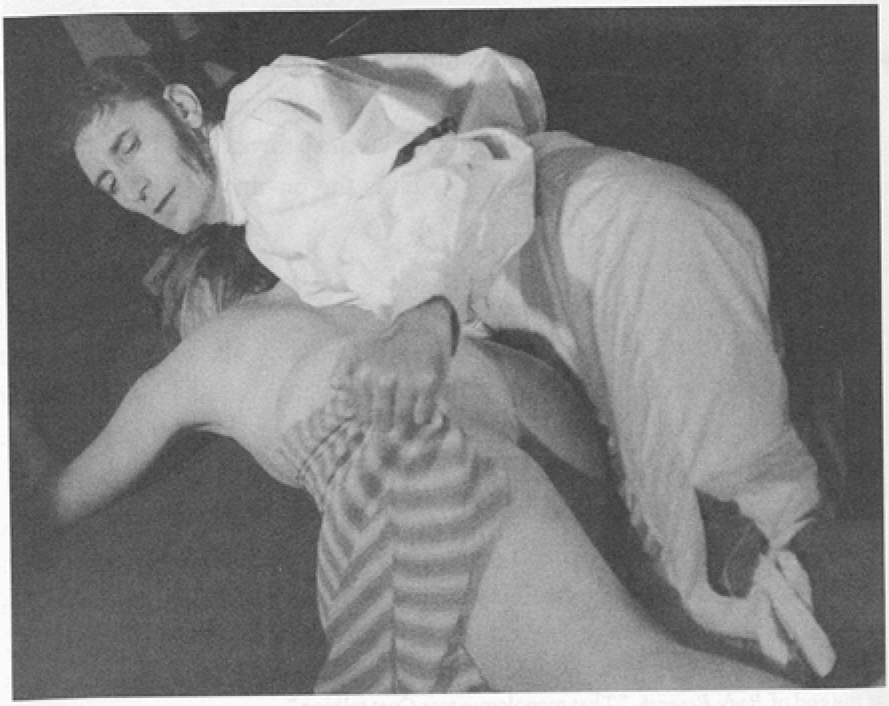


"I feel uncomfortable." Dink and Dee (Berwick Kaler and Julie Shaw) prowling the streets in Nightbirds, *1970.*

The ultimate Milligan horror—Berwick Kaler descends to Julie Shaw's nether regions in Nightbirds.

THE COMPELLING STORY OF TWO YOUNG 'ALIVES'
-facing a moral self-destruction they dare not admit!
ANDY MILLIGAN'S
Night birds
JULIE SHAW BERWICK KALER
X RECOMMENDED FOR ADULTS ONLY! No one under 17 years of age admitted

Harpies on the prowl. Two shots from Milligan's most visually arresting film, 1970's The Body Beneath.



Sweeney Todd (John Miranda) contemplates some back-door action after snuffing his wife, a scene apparently excised from Bloodthirsty Butchers.

Susan Cassidy as the unforgettable dance-hall floozy in Bloodthirsty Butchers. *"One of the few females that I liked, really. A four-letter word wouldn't bother her."*

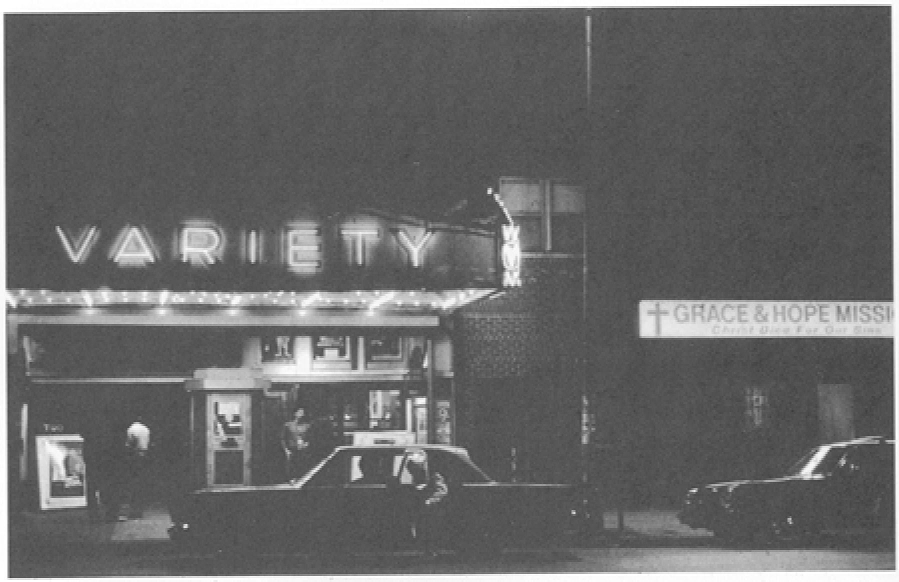
Lycanthrope love, with the usual inbreeding mixed in. The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!, *1972.*

Hope Stansbury performs a meat-cleaver manicure in The Rats Are Coming! The Werewolves Are Here!

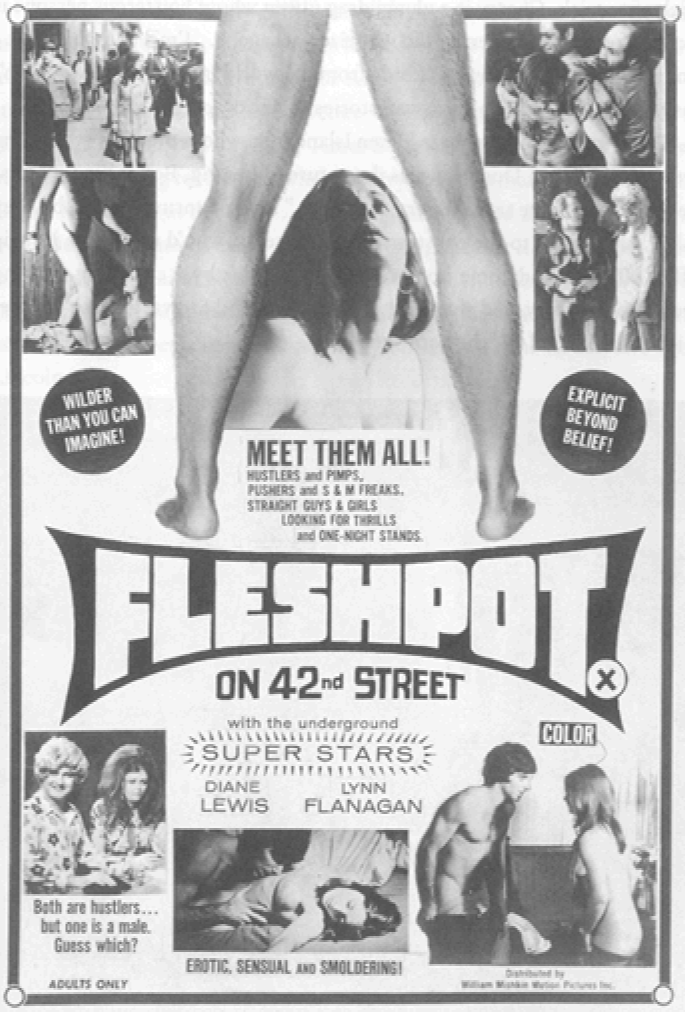
Hunchback lust as portrayed by Jack Spenser and Judy Israel in the blasphemous Guru, the Mad Monk, *1970*.

Murderous medieval mayhem from Guru. *Neil Flanagan as Guru, far right. Hooded executioners also figure in Milligan's* Torture Dungeon.

". . . and Blood-Red Roses." Flyer for Milligan's doomed Nova Productions, circa 1970. (author's collection)

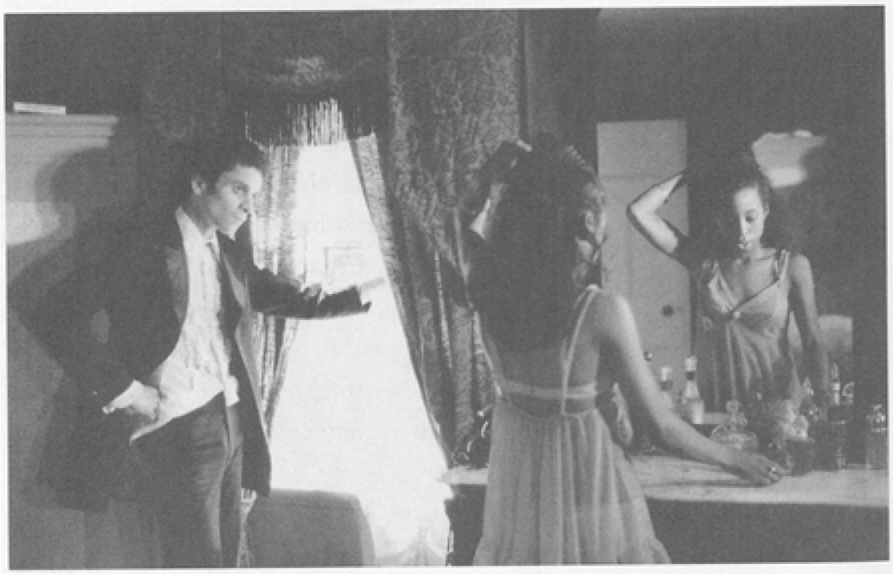


Variety Photoplays, late eighties. One of the sticky stops on the Milligan night shift. (photo by Yara Clüver)



Fleshpot on 42nd Street, *1972. "I found it sleazy to shoot a penetration—why not just turn out a Mafia fuck film?"*

Harry Reems (a.k.a. "Bob Walters") meets his demise in the tragic end of Fleshpot on 42nd Street.



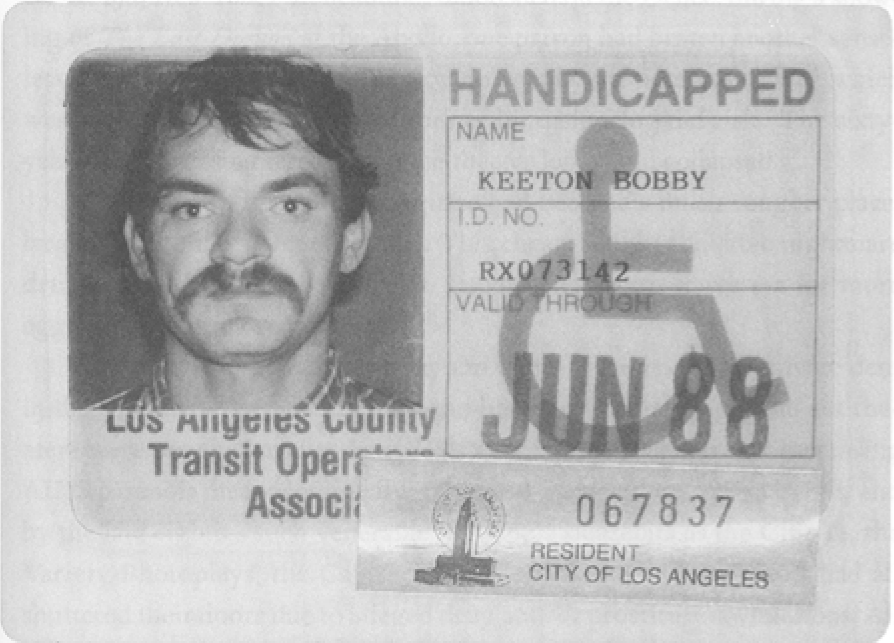
*"*Supercool *was an abortion . . . a very glitzy, very elegant picture." Rare still from* Supercool, *circa 1973.*

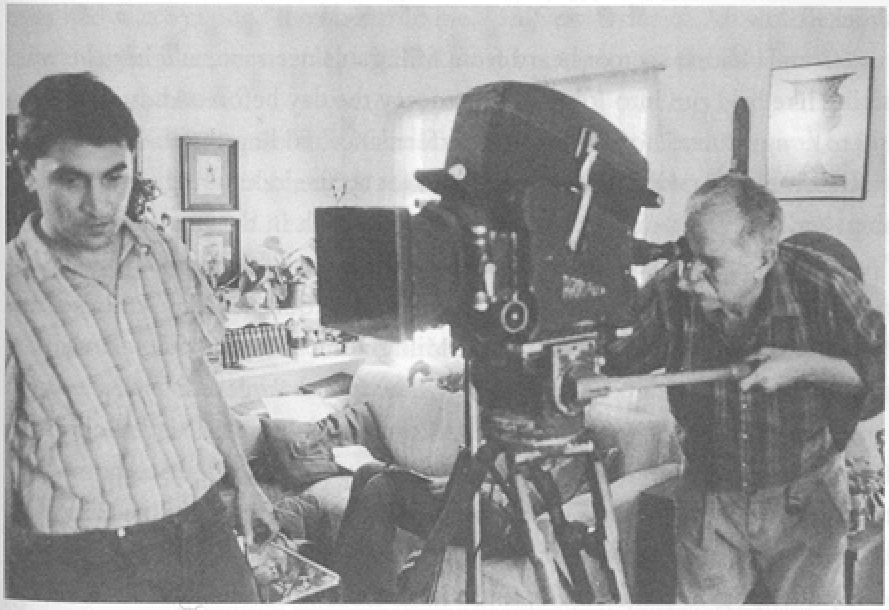
Antebellum high jinks from The House of Seven Belles, *an unfinished Milligan epic from the late 1970s.*

A spooky Belles *shot, with tinkertoy set by Andy.*

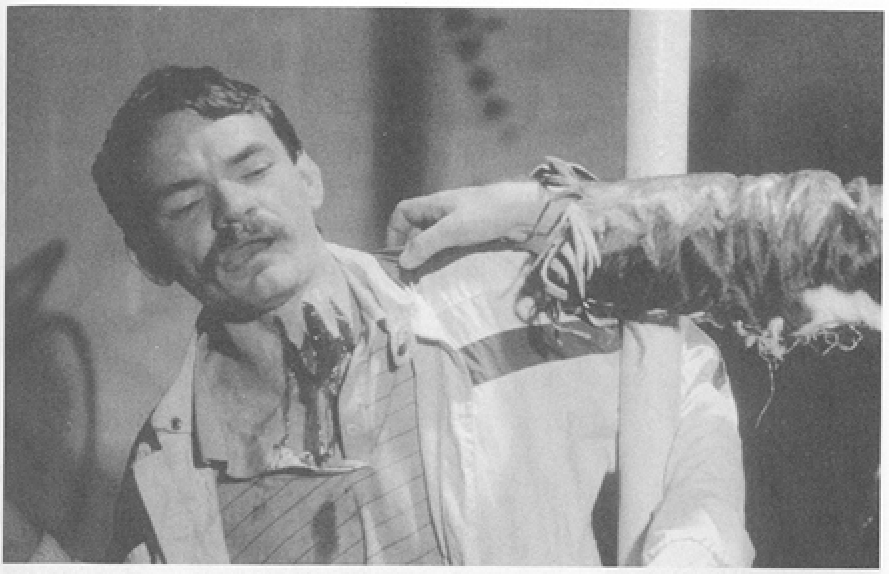
The feminine side of Hal Borske (right). Milligan's absymal sitcom, Red Rooster, *1983. (author's collection)*

From sin to . . . Cinderella? Flyer for Milligan's last New York City production, Cinderella *'85. (author's collection)*





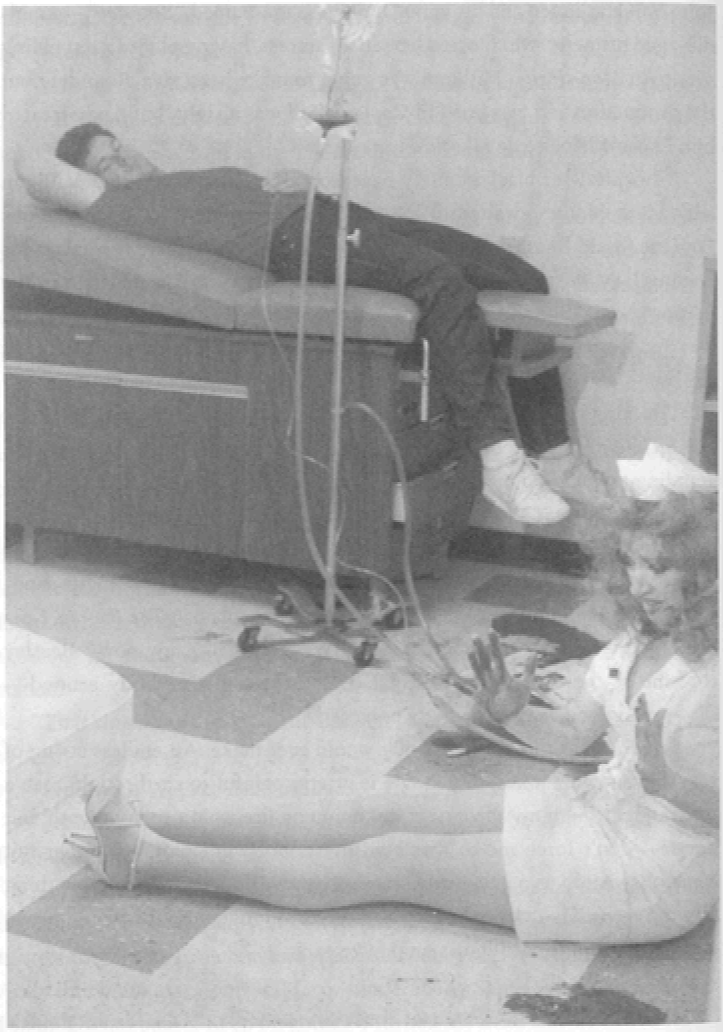
"Why didn't anybody tell me there was no film in the camera?" Milligan and right-hand man Charlie Beesley in action, 1987. Monstrosity *production still by Thomas Vozza.*



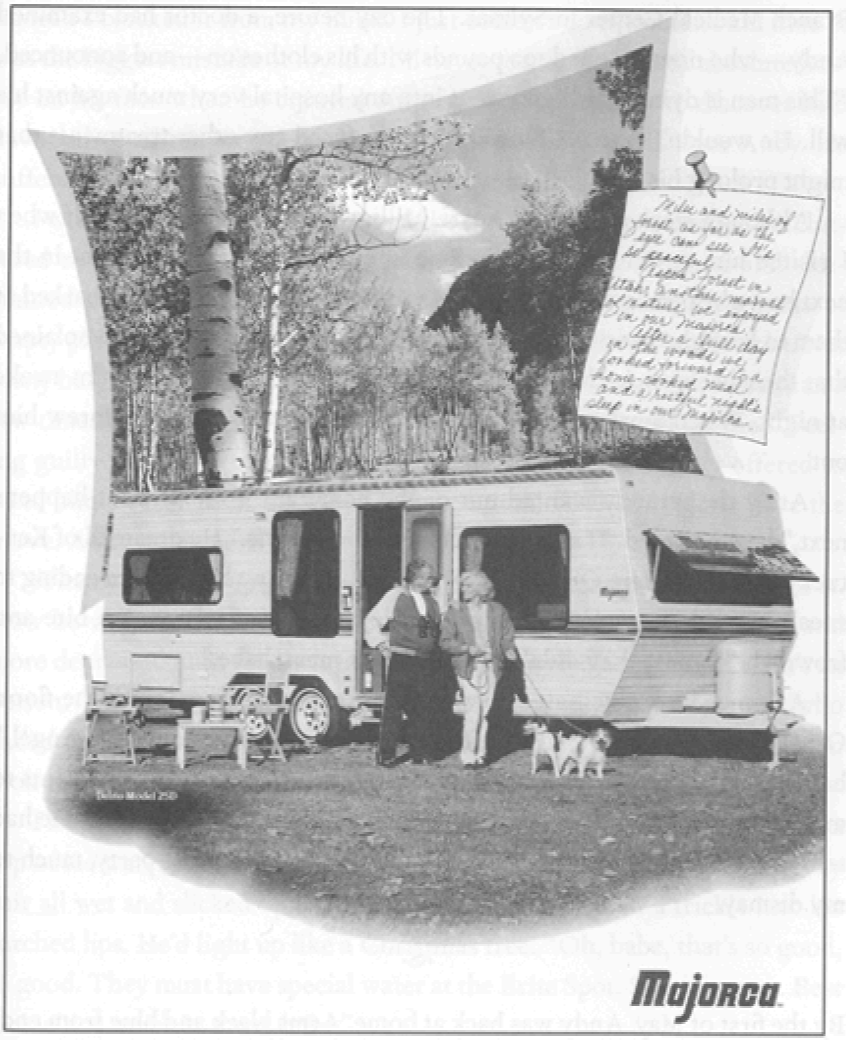
"The happiest time of my life." Wayne Keeton's Monstrosity *debut—and demise. Production still by Thomas Vozza.*

Full can of gas in shaking hand, the author doubles for Frankie—and lives. Note apprehensive production assistant, lower left. Monstrosity *photo by Yara Clüver.*

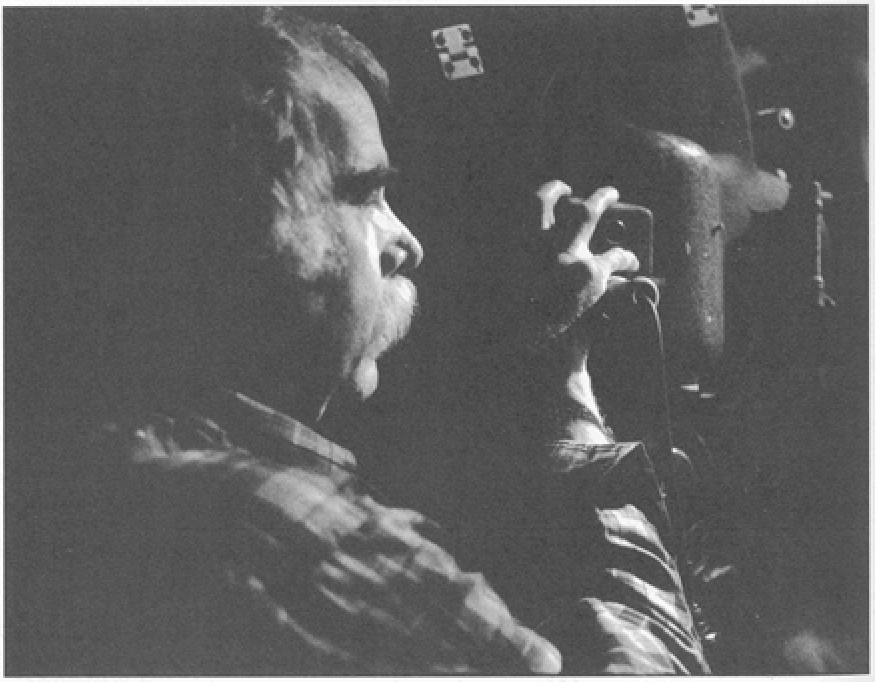
"It's a big country. . . . Maybe I'll be like you, Agnes, and just walk around." Frankie (Hal Borske) and Agnes the bag lady in the screw-loose conclusion of Monstrosity. *Production still by Thomas Vozza.*



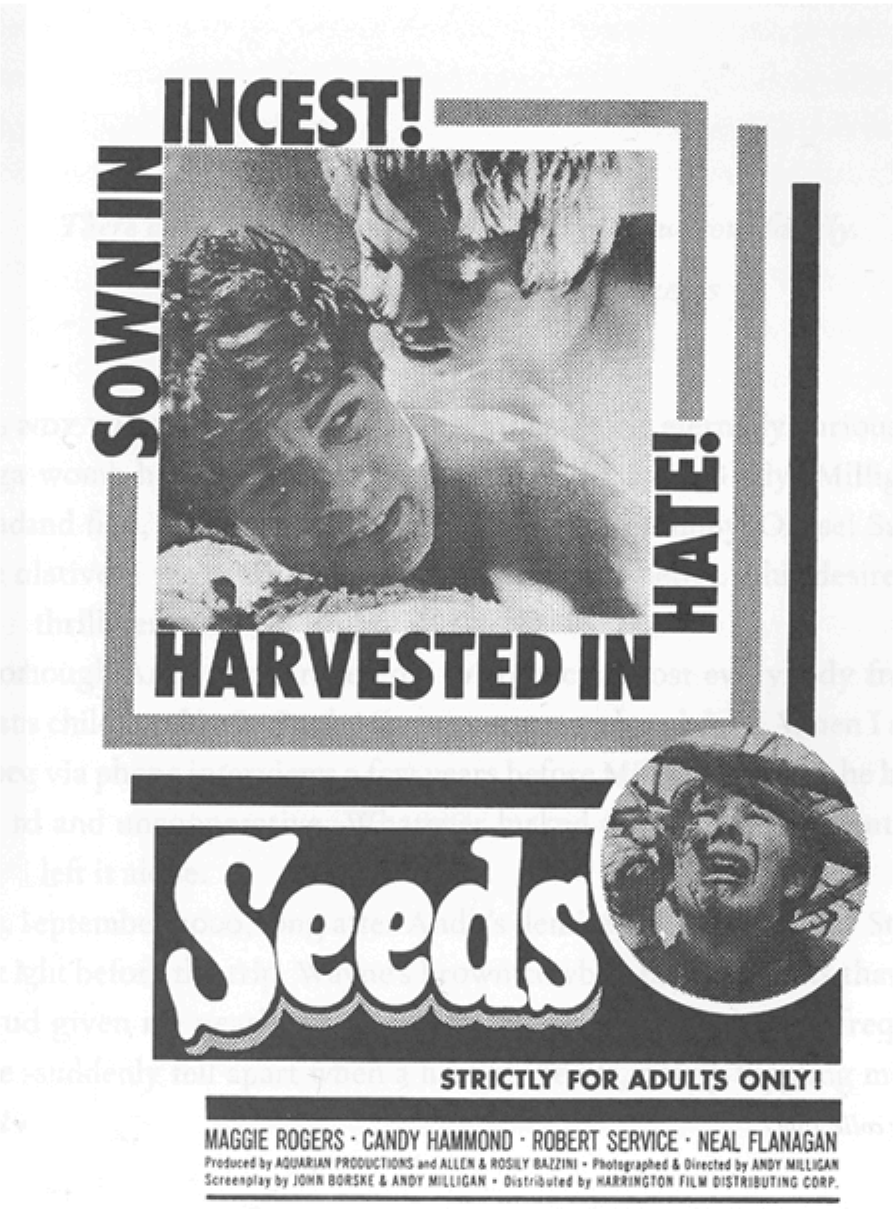
Alleged hilarity from Surgikill, *Milligan's pathetic final picture. Production still by Thomas Vozza.*



Everybody's favorite grandpa. Milligan appears in an RV ad, late 1980s.



"Life ain't easy, babe." Andy and his camera, hiding in the shadows. Portrait by Yara Clüver.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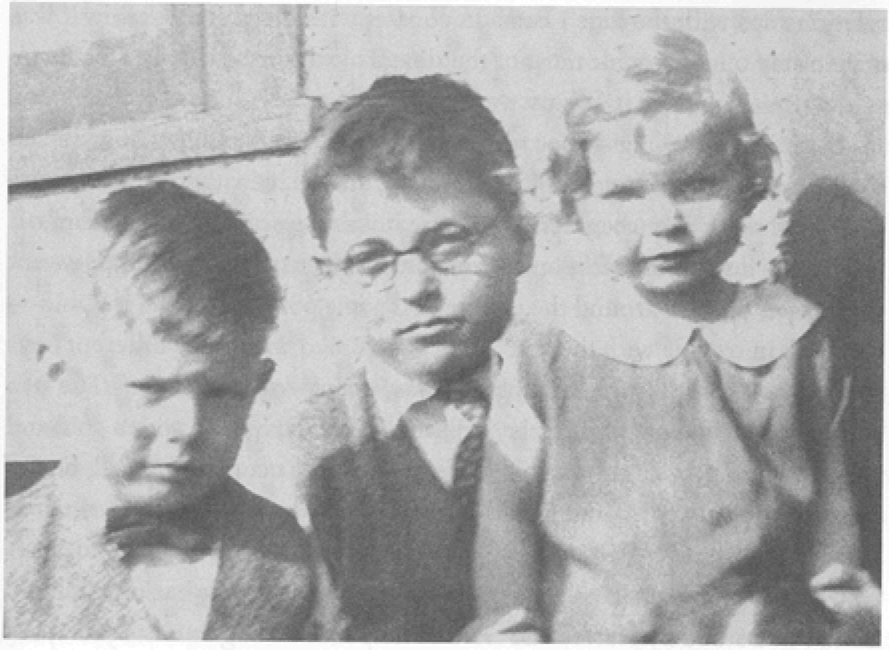
INCEST!
HARVESTED IN
HATE!
Seeds
STRICTLY FOR ADULTS ONLY!
MAGGIE ROGERS · CANDY HAMMOND · ROBERT SERVICE · NEAL FLANAGAN
Produced by AQUARIAN PRODUCTIONS and ALLEN & ROSILY BAZZINI · Photographed & Directed by ANDY MILLIGAN
Screenplay by JOHN BORSKE & ANDY MILLIGAN · Distributed by HARRINGTON FILM DISTRIBUTING CORP.

Gladys Marie, Andrew Senior, and Harley. "They battled a lot—we weren't protected from it, either." (author's collection)



Andy, Harley, Louise. "Andrew was inclined to be, oh, I don't know how you put it, feminine."
(author's collection)

(author's collection)

"Rosie, I want you to remember this moment for the rest of your life." Tobias (Berwick Kaler) about to plunge the knife into wife Rosie (Linda Driver) while declaring his love. Bloodthirsty Butchers, *1970*.

Female trouble in The Bitch. *Jacqui Colton on bottom. Dresses by Raffiné.*

Jimmy McDonough, center, with Andy Milligan and Hal Borske during the shooting of Monstrosity, *Fall 1987. Photo by Yara Clüver. Boots by Raffiné.*